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A LIFE INTEREST.

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CHAPTER X.

MARJORY IN OFFICE.

LANGFORD PRIORY was not a grand place; it was a comfortable, unpretending residence, having been originally little better than a large farmhouse, to which successive occupants had added as their requirements grew. The name really belonged to some beautiful ruins which were separated from the dwelling by the grounds and a flower-garden. The situation was pleasant, sheltered behind by a wooded height; the ground sloped gently in front to an excellent trout stream, and rose again in soft swelling downs to a low range of hills which stretched to the west; while on the other side was a wide district of woodland belonging to a neighbouring nobleman.

The estate of Langford was not large. Mr. Carteret's fortune was principally derived from other sources, and he was not likely to diminish it.

Mrs. Carteret was well born as well as wealthy, and generally considered by society a very nice woman. Those who knew her more intimately were often puzzled to make up their minds whether she were a shrewd observer or a fool, a mere automaton or a woman of taste and character. She hated trouble and delighted in dress—these were her two most salient points. She spent a great deal of money on herself; but now and then she would surprise every one by an act of unexpected generosity.

That she was by no means weak in some directions none knew so well as her husband; she never quarrelled with him or interfered with him, but she went steadily her own way, and even occasionally influenced his actions. Each had a thorough contempt for the pursuits of the other; but they did not display

this too openly, and on the whole were not an unhappy couple. Perhaps the only living thing Mrs. Carteret loved was her little dog; and the only opinion she ever preferred to her own was her maid's.

The morning they left London had been lowering and damply, breathlessly hot, and after they reached the little country town of Market Gilston, their nearest station, a heavy thunderstorm came on as they drove to the Priory, deluging horses and driver. Uncle Carteret was dreadfully cross because some drops of rain made their way through the top of the closed landau; he prophesied a severe attack of rheumatism, and on arriving went into a feeble little rage because no fire had been lit in his room. In short everything went wrong. His spirit was sorely tried by the evidences of wear and tear in the furniture, carpets, &c., which he declared to be wholesale destruction, but which in truth were not worse than might have been expected, considering the house had passed through the hands of two successive tenants since the owner had seen it. Nevertheless, Mr. Carteret grumbled and lamented all dinner-time; he wished he could get rid of the confounded place altogether, &c., &c.

These disagreeables, however, made little impression on Marjory, she was enchanted with everything. The gardens, the fresh delicious green of grass and foliage, the ruins, the picturesque irregular house—all seemed delightful to a girl who had only known the streets of London and the flats of Norfolk, where she had occasionally spent a few weeks with a schoolfellow. To her the place seemed spacious and splendid and the household numerous.

The thunderstorm cleared the air, and the clouds breaking away, a glorious setting sun turned the slowly receding masses of vapour in the west into gorgeous aerial mountains and islets of crimson, violet, orange and palest lilac.

Mrs. Carteret, while her husband fussed and fumed, had taken Marjory upstairs and shown her the room prepared for her. Then she took a seat in her own apartment, to watch with keen interest the unpacking of her boxes and the arrangement of their contents in drawers and wardrobes.

Marjory, by her advice, betook herself to a similar employment, and had made her little room look quite home-like by the time dinner was announced. After, Mr. Carteret declared he was too tired to do anything; and Mrs. Carteret, neither fussed nor fatigued nor disturbed in any way, took up her tatting and settled Fairy on the sofa beside her.

"I always used to sit on this sofa when we lived here ten years ago," she said to Marjory; "but I had not learned tatting. I used to net then; and I had just had Fairy given to me—he was a little puppy."

"It is a delightful place," returned Marjory, looking round and

longing to escape out of doors. "Are you not pleased to come back?"

"I cannot say I am. It is dreadfully dull, and I have been accustomed to people coming in and talking, so that I shall like it less than I did; still, it is rather nice in summer."

"May I go out and walk round the garden, if you do not mind being left alone?" asked Marjory with some hesitation.

"Oh, yes! You may go, if you like. I dare say it is dull for you. You had better put on overshoes, the grass will be quite wet."

Like a bird escaped from a cage, Marjory flew upstairs to find her hat, and was soon wandering, with a delicious sense of enjoyment, through the garden, across the closely-shaven grass of the pleasure-grounds, and into the precincts of the ruined priory.

The entrance had fallen, only the bases of some of the clustered columns remained; while a quantity of carved stones, corbels and crockets, pieces of broken tracery and lengths of dogtooth decoration were piled at either side, partially covered with flowering creepers, cared for without being trained. A gravelled path led to where the altar once stood. Behind, the tracery of the east window was in wonderful preservation, as were also a few of the windows and part of the wall at either side of the chancel; a few lime-trees and a short sturdy oak beautified the interior, which was carpeted with soft mossy grass.

"How lovely!" said Marjory, seating herself on a rustic bench placed where the altar once stood, so as to command a fine view of the sunset. "It is just the sort of place one might read about in a novel! How sweet the wall-flowers are! Oh, how charmed Dick would be here! I should like to know all about it. If Uncle Carteret wants antiquities, I wish he would hunt up the history of this delightful old priory and let me write it out for him. What a view! It is a sort of place that makes one feel good, or at least as if you wished to be good, and that is something. Those old monks *must* have been nice! they were certainly good to the poor. How delightful life might be here, and *is*, I suppose! It is cruel to think how miserable it is in great crowded cities. Oh! I could be happy anywhere, almost anywhere, if only I had my own mother and if my father loved me! Still I suppose it is better to have no mother than one who dislikes you, as Mrs. Acland dislikes Dick. Poor Dick! I wonder what has become of him? Shall I ever see him again? I suppose, if I were in a proper frame of mind, I should be inclined to forgive Mrs. Acland—particularly here, for the place was holy—is holy! But I hate her all the same, and I never can forgive her: what is more, I shall not try! I don't think it is all because she made my home miserable and turned out both my brothers. I believe if I had met her in her best clothes at a party I should dislike and distrust her the moment I looked

in her face! Still I don't want to harm her, at least not *very* much." Then the sweetness, silence and beauty round her began to penetrate Marjory's soul, and softer pleasanter thoughts stole into her heart, including a warm sense of gratitude to Uncle and Aunt Carteret for bringing her to so charming a scene.

"I'll do the very best I can for them both," she resolved. "I wish he was not quite such a funny little man. I am afraid of laughing at him sometimes. Mrs. Carteret is very nice. I wish I could learn something of her elegant quiet manner. I know I must seem uncouth to her. I always feel in such a hurry."

The view all round was picturesque and varied—the open downs to the west, the gentle dip of the ground to the stream in front, the rich woods of Lord Beaulieu's domain rising to shelter the valley on the east. Though so near the house, the remains of the chancel wall completely hid the seat Marjory occupied from observation; indeed it was only from the entrance it could be seen.

But time was slipping away; the sun had sunk behind the downs, and Marjory remembered she ought to return. On the hall door-steps she met Brown, her uncle's valet.

"Mr. Carteret has been asking for you 'm," he said solemnly.

"I am so sorry," cried Marjory, hurrying to the drawing-room with a sudden sense of guilt.

"Where have you been?" asked Mr. Carteret peevishly. "I had no idea you were wandering about, at the risk of taking cold and incapacitating yourself for the duties you have undertaken. I must warn you that a cough is quite intolerable to me! It puts me into a fever. I cannot sit in a room with a person who coughs."

"I hope I shall not have one then," said Marjory with a sunny smile. "It is quite warm this evening; no one could take cold. And, oh! I am so grateful to you for letting me come with you to this lovely place."

Even Mr. Carteret's testiness was not proof against the joyous freshness of her pleasant youth.

"Glad you are pleased. Now, as it is a little too early to go to bed, I want to know if you play cards or any games so as to help me over an hour."

"I am afraid I only know 'Beggar my neighbour' and 'Nap.'"

"Have you any idea of chess?"

"Only just an idea; the boys used to teach me, but they said I was very stupid."

"There are chessmen somewhere; ring for Brown. Brown, get me the chessboard and men. If you attend to my instructions I will make a chess-player of you; for I have been accustomed to hold my own with the Chevalier Palligiardini and Herr Vandervoordt, the champion players of Italy and Holland."

Here Brown returned, and Mr. Carteret proceeded to set up the pieces. Then began a weary lesson for poor Marjory. The niceties of moving the king's pawn, of check and checkmate, &c., &c., were elaborately expounded till the poor child was dazed, bewildered, and overdone with fatigue, more of excitement than of travel. At last Mr. Carteret, who was greatly pleased with his own lucid explanations, exclaimed, "Why, Marjory, I do believe you are falling asleep!"

"Very naturally," said Mrs. Carteret, who had been playing patience by herself. "It is ten o'clock, and quite time to go to bed."

"Ten o'clock! I had no idea it was so late. Do you think you will remember what I have been telling you, Marjory?"

"Yes, Uncle Carteret—the beginning; but I am very tired."

"Then ring for my chocolate, and you can go to bed."

The first few days at Langford Priory were broken and unsettled. Mr. Carteret was too busy discussing various details connected with the estate to give Marjory any employment, so she drifted into Mrs. Carteret's hands. She read aloud portions of the newspapers, dawdled with her round the garden and sometimes as far as the dairy, gathered flowers to fill the vases and china bowls in the drawing-room, and wrote a few notes at her aunt's dictation. Still she had abundant time to inspect the contents of a small and comfortable library, in which she promised herself to spend many a happy hour. She mounted the library steps with almost childish glee, to examine the topmost shelves, and sat there absorbed in some quaint tome with curious streaky engravings, where the muscles of men and horses were shown in the strongest relief by the tremendous exertions they appeared to be making.

These days of happy idleness, however, were few and brief. The cases which contained what Mr. Carteret proudly called "his collection," arrived from London within the first week of their stay, and he was in a fever to open and arrange them.

"I must arrange a plan of classification at once simple and distinct, or we shall never get through the work that is before us."

"The boxes are not large," said Marjory, whose arm he had taken, to assist his steps from the dining-room.

"Ah! but if you think of the varied size of the specimens, most of them delicate and minute, you may form an idea of the number to be catalogued. On Monday—no, Tuesday—I shall open the case No 1, and begin our task. At present I am feeling very unequal to mental or physical exertion; that tendency to heart complaint, which is the result of a highly strung nervous intellect acting on an extremely delicate organization, obliges me to be very careful—unceasingly careful."

"Mrs. and Miss Waring are in the drawing-room, sir," interrupted Brown, who deigned to act as butler in the improvised establishment.

"Oh, indeed! Ah! then we must go and see them. Miss Waring is a very intelligent young lady, our neighbour here, and also an acquaintance of ours in the lovely classic land of literature and art." He turned, and still resting his hand on Marjory's arm, led her to the drawing-room. Here they found a bundle in black silk and lace, crowned by a grey bonnet, on the sofa beside Mrs. Carteret, and on a low chair in front of her sat the black-haired bright-complexioned lady to whom Marjory had been introduced on the eventful sabbath on which she had appealed to Mr. Carteret. Miss Waring greeted her with kindly cordiality and presented her to her mother. Then Mr. Carteret claimed her attention, and Marjory, much fascinated by her frank manner and pleasant smile, was content to listen, thereby gathering some knowledge of the neighbouring society.

The rector was now so old, he was obliged to have two curates. His daughters were all married, and his eldest son's widow kept house for him. Then the chief doctor at Market Gilston was dead, but his son had inherited his practice and was making a fortune. Mr. Sheldon the banker was paralyzed, and things were not so satisfactory as they used to be in that family—so far Miss Waring, with some commentaries from her auditors.

"The chief event, however, has been Lord Beaulieu's return," said Miss Waring.

"Oh! he has come back, has he? Why, it must be five or six years since the minor died and he succeeded. Where has he been all this time?"

"Oh, everywhere—sketching and yachting. He is more a Bohemian than a peer. However, he is now busy restoring and beautifying the castle, and giving employment to numbers."

"Ha! I suppose he is getting rid of the minority savings as fast as he can."

"At any rate in a better fashion than the old lord disposed of his money. Except for building, he does not seem to have any extravagant tastes."

"I hope he is doing his work in good taste! I must go over and see what he is about."

"Just now he is away, I think." A little more gossip and the visitors took leave.

A few days later and Mr. Carteret found himself at leisure to open his cases and set to work on his famous collection. This was the beginning of troubles.

The experts to whom the packing had been confided had either put wrong numbers on the boxes or disposed of the contents in a different order from that dictated by the owner. Two mornings were consumed in indignation and despair over the discovery of fresh iniquities as each package was opened, and then Mr. Carteret, armed with several lists—among which he constantly lost his way—endeavoured to ascertain if his treasures were all intact.

The confusion was great, and the irritation indescribable. "I don't see how I shall ever regulate such a chaos," cried the enraged virtuoso, throwing himself back in his seat.

"Suppose I take one of these new exercise books," said Marjory compassionately, "and write down everything as we find it, you can give me a description?"

"That would not be the slightest use," cried Uncle Carteret testily; "you see my object is to classify as I go; and now an awful idea suggests itself—I believe my gold Alexander was in this case; pray turn out that small coffer of olive wood again and shake the cotton wool. That gold Alexander was the crown of my collection; and how can I face Vere Ellis, who is coming here next week, if I have lost his gift? Why, there are scarcely any gold Alexanders in existence, and he laid me under an immense obligation by presenting me so great a treasure. It was not with the other coins."

"It is a coin, then?" asked Marjory, still sympathetic, though beginning to be dreadfully weary and bored.

"It is a coin," repeated her uncle, exasperated beyond endurance. "Great heavens! and you are supposed to have been educated. This is the way in which English women are left in outer darkness respecting the art, the genius, the—the development of antique civilization, which can alone be surmised from these precious remnants of the past! Have you thoroughly examined the contents of case No 1?"

"Yes, uncle; I am sure I have taken out everything."

"Then pray put them back again; I do not want the contents of one to be mixed with the other; when you have finished we will open No 2."

So on, through a lovely summer's day. Mrs. Carteret sent to know if Mr. Carteret or Miss Acland would come with her to visit Mrs. Waring, but a hasty message from the former that they were much too busy cut short Marjory's hopes in that direction. "When uncle has found them all and we get to the catalogue it will not be so bad," she said to herself. She was in truth sorely disappointed. She had looked forward to the unpacking of the antiquities and curiosities of which she had heard so much with the keenest interest, hoping to acquire a fund of information from so learned a multi as her uncle, also to feast her eyes on beautiful forms. When therefore a quantity of dusty broken bits of stone, rusty iron, small begrimed imperfect statuettes, corroded bronzes, bits of coarse mosaic, a few small panels decorated with paintings of dislocated saints, some models of pillars and arches and a casket filled with copper and silver coins, she could hardly restrain her lips from the fatal exclamation, "Is this all?"

At dinner Mr. Carteret enlarged upon his loss, without attracting much attention from his wife, who was cutting up some chicken for her dog. She only observed, "You ought to have

employed Smith to pack for you. He is a far better man than Ludovici."

"Nonsense, my dear. Ludovici has a feeling for art, an appreciation for the treasures of antiquity. It was quite gratifying to see the delight he took in my little collection."

"He would *say* anything."

"Pray when did you hear from Ellis? When does he talk of coming?" asked Mr. Carteret, not caring to pursue the subject.

"I had a letter from him just before we left town. He was to arrive on the 27th, and hoped to be with us a few days after. He has been promoted, and is now first *attaché*."

"I thought he was rather young for such promotion."

"Young!" repeated Mrs. Carteret. "He must be two or three and thirty."

"Impossible! Why, his grandfather and I were at Berlin in—No—no," interrupting himself, "it must have been his father—it *was* his father. At any rate I shall be ashamed to see him now that his most kind and valuable gift has disappeared. Why, this is the 27th."

"What have you lost?"

"Why, I have been talking about it all dinner-time. My Alexander—my gold Alexander!"

"But it is not lost," said Mrs. Carteret calmly. "Do you not remember you gave it to me to keep? It is in my jewel-case."

"My dear, do you mean to make me out an idiot? I could not forget such a circumstance."

"I assure you it is in my jewel-case."

"Impossible!" gasped Mr. Carteret.

"Brown, pray tell Virginie to bring me my jewel-case."

In a few minutes Virginie appeared, bearing a large leather case. Mrs. Carteret unlocked and opened it, sought in a few of the receptacles it contained, and produced a pill-box, in which, on a bed of cotton wool, lay the missing treasure.

Mr. Carteret took and gazed at it with mixed feelings—joy at its recovery, annoyance at being proved guilty of so great a lapse of memory. "I am sure," he said peevishly, "this horrid place is beginning to dull my faculties already. I could not have believed I should forget this."

"You were so worried about those cases to-day, it is no wonder you forgot," murmured Marjory, compassionating his mortification.

"Exactly so—exactly so. I really lost my head for the moment."

Virtue sometimes has its reward. The fatigue and excitement of the day disposed Mr. Carteret to sleep after dinner. As this was an old fogey habit which he carefully concealed, he usually retired to his study or morning-room, on the plea of having important letters to write, and requested not to be disturbed until Brown brought his chocolate.

When he had executed his manœuvre, Marjory took advantage of his absence and asked her aunt if she might take a walk in the grounds.

It was very delightful to escape into the fresh perfumed air, away from the sound of Uncle Carteret's peevish voice, to enjoy the odour of a newly-mown field down by the river, to rest a while in the ruins and gaze over towards the downs, where the sun was beginning to set. How George would enjoy fishing in the stream, and Dick, too, though he was less keen about such sports. Oh! it would really be too delightful to have the boys there safe away from Mrs. Acland. She wondered when any one would write to her. She had already sent two letters home; perhaps one from George was lying there for her. She was sure Mrs. Acland would never forward it.

Then the question suggested itself, "I wonder what sort of a person this Mr. Vere Ellis is? He is rather old; I suppose he is another learned solemn man like Uncle Carteret. I wish he was younger, it would be pleasanter. I hope he plays chess! I get so dreadfully sleepy. Oh! if he were nice and would come and walk with me sometimes, it would be charming. After all, thirty-two or three is not so very old!" and she ran over in her own mind the heroes of many novels who must have been about that age, gradually forming an ideal in her imagination of a very superior highly educated gentleman, who would talk over her head, yet condescend to take some notice of her and some interest in her improvement. Perhaps he had a wife. Somehow this suggestion took a little from the interest of the picture. Miss Marjory was by nature a coquette, though she was not aware of it.

A week of rain keeping Mr. Carteret in the house, Marjory began to perceive that to reside with and to be employed by her uncle was not exactly the bed of roses it appeared to her at first. The catalogue and the bad weather united were too much for his equanimity. Marjory's mistakes, which were not so very numerous considering her inexperience and the endless alterations of plans on the part of her dictator, were bitterly rebuked and harped upon till only pride enabled her to restrain her tears and kept her from flying to her own room first and out of the house after.

But she resolved to bear almost anything rather than return defeated to the taunts and triumphs of her father's wife, who would be but too glad to point out the hopelessness of a girl who could not get on with her own mother's relations.

She thought that Mrs. Carteret sympathized with her, though that lady did not express her feelings, not being disposed to exhaust herself in words.

"Have you been crying?" she asked quietly one evening when, worn out by a series of small rages while wrestling with his catalogue, Mr. Carteret had retired to "write letters of importance."

Marjory was startled and vexed by the query, but answered honestly, "Yes, Aunt Carteret," blushing and smiling.

"If you cry because Mr. Carteret is cross, you are very foolish. The more he sees you are afraid of him the worse he is."

"I don't think I am afraid of him, I should be ashamed of being afraid of any one; but I did hope to please him, and I do not."

"You please him as much as any one ever did. He always quarrels with his *employés*; only as you are a girl and a relative, he thinks he may say and do what he likes. The next time he is very tiresome you might tell him—prettily and politely, of course—that you are sorry you cannot please him and that you would rather go home. It is very unpleasant to see people with red eyes."

"But I would rather *not* go home!" cried Marjory, alarmed at such a suggestion. "I want to stay here; I am so much happier than I ever was before, at least since I was a little child, except when Uncle Carteret is cross."

"Then you are very easily pleased," returned Mrs. Carteret not unkindly. "As to Mr. Carteret, you are silly to mind him; he would be very sorry to lose you. He is never fond of any one, but he is sometimes pleased with you, and then you cost him nothing."

"Oh, no, Aunt Carteret! he gave me beautiful dresses and quantities of things."

"He did not give them *all*."

"Then *you* did, dear aunt! How kind and good of you, when I was a stranger and no relation to you! I wish you would love me a little, and let me love you!" Marjory seized and kissed Mrs. Carteret's hand, leaving it moist from some irrepressible tears that would drop.

"You are dreadfully impulsive, Marjory," said Mrs. Carteret with a smile—a rare smile. "You must learn self-restraint or you will be at the mercy of every one who chooses to play upon you or wound you."

"I am not so easily wounded, I assure you; only people I really care for can hurt me. I am as hard as—as a stone to Mrs. Acland."

"Ah! your stepmother?" said Mrs. Carteret; and thereupon the floodgates opened and Marjory poured out her tale of woe.

Mrs. Carteret rather enjoyed listening to gossip, without exerting herself to put questions. "I did not like Mrs. Acland much," she said at length. "She is handsome, and even *distinguée* looking, but I do not think she is a gentlewoman. Who was she?"

"She was a Mrs. Cranston, the widow of an artist."

"But who was she originally, before she married?"

"Oh! I have no idea; but I thought she was very ladylike; I know she was always finding fault with me for my vulgarity."

"No, you are not vulgar," said Mrs. Carteret, after disentangling her thread, which had got into some complication. "You are unconventional, but you are a lady. You might improve yourself if you liked. You speak too suddenly; then you dart at things instead of moving gently. No well-trained person is ever in a hurry."

"I will try and be quiet. Oh! I wish I could be like you, aunt! you always seem to do and say the right thing. But if you only knew the tremendous hurry I feel in sometimes—often to reach what I want and to say what I want, you would understand how hard it is for me to be slow."

"I do not suppose I *could* understand it," returned Mrs. Carteret with an unusually indulgent smile. It was not in human nature to be indifferent to the warm sincere admiration of so bright a creature. "But I should like to see you improve; and take my advice, exercise your self-control by resisting your inclination to be wounded or frightened by Mr. Carteret. Whether you do well or ill he will complain all the same; and then you must suffer for all *his* mistakes. Most men are very weak; your father yields to his wife, for instance. I must say it is most unjust to dress you so badly; and then to send your brother to sea in a common ship—it is positively cruel!"

This was a speech of extraordinary length for Mrs. Carteret. Marjory thanked her for her counsel and promised she would do her best to follow it.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW ARRIVAL.

SOME days after this conversation came an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Waring to Mr. and Mrs. Carteret and Miss Acland.

Marjory felt quite elated at being asked to dinner, and ardently hoped Uncle Carteret would consent to go.

After luncheon, during which meal he directed his wife to accept Mrs. Waring's invitation, instead of taking a book or newspaper to a seat on the verandah as was his usual custom, he observed, "I think, Marjory, a couple more hours' work will complete the first part of our task. Then I shall rest for a day or two before I attack the other cases."

Back to the library, therefore, was Marjory marched, and set to work by her inexorable uncle. The prospect of a break in the routine of her existence was cheering, but the idea of going out to dinner was positively exhilarating, if for nothing else but for the joy of wearing the pretty half-dress evening costume her aunt had given her.

She had just glanced at the clock, and noted that only an hour

and five minutes had elapsed since she had resumed her pen, when she heard the sound of approaching wheels. It might be Miss Waring's pony carriage; if so she regretted being chained to her task. None of her aunt's other visitors interested her much.

Presently the door opposite opened, and Mrs. Carteret, looking a little more animated than usual, walked in, followed by a gentleman.

He was not tall, or did not seem tall because of his breadth of shoulder. His hair was short, wavy and dark, if not quite black. His eyes, too, were very dark and deeply set under thick eye-brows, and his clean-shaven jaw was strong but not heavy. He was not good-looking, his features were irregular, his mouth somewhat large, yet his whole style and bearing had an indescribable stamp of distinction such as Marjory had never seen before; he was well dressed and moved with tranquil assured self-possession.

"Here is Mr. Ellis," said Mrs. Carteret; "he came over from Aldenham this morning, not direct from London."

"Ah, Ralph! though I greatly object to surprises of this kind, I am really glad to see you," said Mr. Carteret, rising and pulling off his spectacles. "When did you reach England?"

"About three weeks ago. I have been greatly occupied with business and I suppose what I ought to call pleasure ever since. Glad to see you looking so well," he added.

"Well, my dear boy, I wish I were; I wish I *felt* well. This frail tenement constantly reminds me that an indifferent physique, not the flight of years, weighs me down."

"I do not think Mr. Carteret is any worse than he was when we met in Paris," observed Mrs. Carteret; "but I must go and order luncheon for you."

Mr. Ellis with a leisurely step moved to the door, opened it, and bowed in a courtly fashion as Mrs. Carteret passed out.

Returning to Mr. Carteret they exchanged a few questions and answers respecting people of whom Marjory knew nothing; then Mr. Carteret, turning suddenly to her, said, "We cannot do any more work to-day; I will not keep you."

Marjory rose immediately, put her papers and books together, and left the room, passing by Ellis. He did not open the door for her, however, or appear to know she was present, yet she felt that he had seen and observed her.

It was with a new and unpleasant sense of mortification that she sat down in the window of her bedroom to think.

Her uncle had always treated her with scant ceremony, although not unkind except when irritable, and though Mrs. Carteret's politeness was unfailing, she did not make much of her husband's young relative, yet Marjory was quite content, but now that a complete stranger came on the scene, a man too who was probably of her blood, that she should be treated as a mere *employée*, sent out of the room without a word of introduction, was too bad!

The new-comer, too, marked his sense of her social inferiority by not opening the door, as he had done for Mrs. Carteret. It was a trifle, she even laughed at her own weakness for thinking so much of such a trifle, yet she knew with the most complete conviction that had he thought she was a young lady he would have opened the door and bowed for her too.

After all, she told herself, it was contemptible folly to let herself grow morbid about such miserable minutiae, and she did rally. Finding a book, and curling herself up on a bench in an out-of-the-way corner of the grounds, she was soon absorbed in the story.

The little incident, however, left a small trail of soreness, and put her on her mettle to meet any slight with good-humoured indifference. "It is better to be here than at home," was her final reflection when dressing for dinner. "And I am sure Uncle Carteret never intends to be rude. I suppose, as I am really a nobody, he cannot help showing that he knows it sometimes; but I shall show that quiet insolent Mr. Ellis that I consider myself his equal, *if I can!* Three score years and ten, the Bible says, is the general length of life. Take eighteen from seventy and fifty-two remain; well, it will be hard if I do not find some pleasure, some joy, some true love in all those years, especially if I deserve it."

Dressing for dinner was a very simple affair at the Priory. Muslin, instead of cotton or woollen, a few knots of ribbon and lace, a rose and spray of fern, were the only changes required. Mr. and Mrs. Carteret had lived so long abroad they had got out of the way of making a regular evening toilet, as is the fashion in an English country house; besides, everything was at present provisional.

Marjory, however, arranged her hair most carefully, and without adding anything unusual to her ordinary attire, made the most of herself, to use an expressive phrase.

Ellis did not appear till the gong sounded for dinner, when he came just in time to lead Mrs. Carteret to table.

Mr. Carteret passed his arm through Marjory's, saying, "I am going to leave you some work to do alone to-morrow; do you think you can manage it?"

"I will try, uncle, if you will explain."

"Then you must be very attentive." Here they reached their places, and Mrs. Carteret, just before she sat down, said, "I had forgotten to explain, this young lady, Miss Acland, is Mr. Carteret's niece, or rather his grand-niece."

"Really such lengthy appellations are unmanageable in conversation," observed Mr. Carteret. Ellis bowed with an air of deference, and shot an observing glance at Marjory, who was infinitely annoyed to feel herself colour quickly when she had intended to be collected and dignified.

There was, however, no further demand on her self-possession, as no one addressed a word to her during the repast.

She was sufficiently amused, nevertheless, listening to the conversation. Uncle Carteret was voluble on many subjects, which were new to his niece, about some excavations at Rome and the discoveries made thereby; about some Etruscan vases and trinkets dug up in a village near Florence; and finally about Wagner *versus* the Italian school. She was struck by the cool superiority of the new guest, the way he threw in a word or two here and there to keep his host going and spare himself trouble. Marjory suspected that he knew a good deal more of most things than her uncle, and though he concealed it, that he felt considerably bored.

To Mrs. Carteret he was pleasantly attentive, and from the sentences they occasionally exchanged Marjory gathered that Mr. Ralph Vere Ellis had been for some years attached to the British embassy at Vienna, that he had applied for an exchange, and hoped to be appointed *attaché* at Paris.

When dinner was over the gentlemen accompanied Mrs. Carteret and Marjory, after the Continental fashion, to the drawing-room.

Then Mr. Carteret seemed to remember Marjory. He was standing in the large bay window at the end of the room, and had just proposed that they should smoke their cigarettes in the garden, when he interrupted himself to say, "Oh, come here, Marjory!" Then taking hold of her arm he led her to Ellis. "Just look at this young lady, Ralph," he exclaimed, "and tell me if you see any likeness to any one!" Ellis did not turn instantly, and the instant thus gained gave Marjory time to collect herself. When therefore the accomplished diplomatist directed his deliberate gaze upon the bright eyes, the fresh delicate face offered to his inspection, she met his glance with steady composure, keeping her eyes on his unflinchingly, till he felt he was being scanned as coolly and critically as if he were an inanimate figure. He was purposely slow in answering in order to try the remarkable *sang-froid* of this country girl.

"I am really at a loss," he said at last; "I fear I am not quick to recognize likenesses. There is a charming contadina with brown eyes in the Lichtenstein gallery by an unknown painter, that has some slight resemblance to Miss—Miss——"

"Miss Acland," put in Mr. Carteret as he paused. "Pooh, nonsense, I mean what likeness do you see to some living person?"

Ellis glanced at Mrs. Carteret, and then a light seemed to dawn upon him. "Ah! yes, of course, I am really very dense. The resemblance is to yourself."

"Exactly. I think it rather striking, and your evidence is a strong confirmation of my opinion. I wish my niece carried the resemblance a little further, and had something of my tastes and

method. She has been working under my direction at a catalogue of my collection, and we do not get on too fast."

"But that is a tremendous task for a young lady," returned Ellis carelessly.

"Come, let us have our cigarettes," said Mr. Carteret, releasing Marjory's arm; and both gentlemen left the room.

"I am glad Mr. Ellis has come. Mr. Carteret is always better tempered when he is here; and then there are several matters to be arranged which cannot be done without him; you know Langford Priory will be his after Mr. Carteret," began Mrs. Carteret as soon as Marjory brought her work and sat down beside her. "He is well bred and well informed. I am afraid he will not stay long, it is too dull for him."

"I suppose so," said Marjory.

"They say he was rather reckless and extravagant as a very young man, but he has been very steady of late years. I know Lady Mary Netterville told me Lord H——, the ambassador at Vienna, has a high opinion of him; I daresay he will be an ambassador some day himself."

"Do you really think so?" said Marjory.

"Yes; they all have to begin by being *attachés*."

After this exertion Mrs. Carteret lapsed into silence, and Marjory's busy brain occupied itself in depicting Mr. Ellis largely decorated with stars and orders, in silk stockings and the shorts of court attire, as the members of the Congress of Vienna were represented in an engraving at home, puzzling his diplomatic brethren with an inscrutable smile; she thought, "I am quite sure it is the sort of thing he is fit for. Fancy his coming out with *me* for a scramble in the woods! I might as well ask Uncle Carteret himself. Yet he has a nice voice, so soft as if he could not take the trouble of speaking fast or loud. I wonder what Mrs. Acland would say to him or he to her?" Then her thoughts naturally went off into another channel; she felt keenly that her father must have almost forgotten her existence, as he had never answered any of her letters.

The addition of a new member to the family party made but small change. Mr. Ellis bestowed a general "Good morning" on the party when he appeared in the breakfast room, and only spoke to Mrs. Carteret, allowing his host to talk uninterruptedly while he paid strict attention to what was set before him.

Soon after breakfast for the first few days Mr. Carteret drove away with his guest to the county town, and Marjory set to her work, finding she got on much more quickly alone. After luncheon she persuaded Mrs. Carteret to take a walk, and then she read aloud the "Court Journal;" so dinner-time came round, and chess and bedtime.

Mr. Ellis asked at breakfast, the third day after his arrival, if Miss Waring was at Dene Court.

"She is residing there ; but she has been away for a few days. We dine there to-morrow, and you had better come ; she will be delighted to see you," said Mr. Carteret.

"It is rather a dangerous experiment to go uninvited to a dinner ; one may make the dreaded thirteenth !"

"Oh ! we can obviate that difficulty," cried Mr. Carteret pleasantly. "Mrs. Carteret, myself and Marjory were invited ; we will not take Marjory ; so there remains the original number, and any hostess will be glad to exchange a girl for a man."

Marjory looked up with a sudden flash of indignant surprise.

"My dear sir, you are brutally frank," said Ellis laughing. "Why should Miss Acland be cheated out of the exciting festivity ?"

"Pooh ! there is nothing in a dinner-party to amuse her : she would not know what to say, and there would be no one to talk to her. If it were a dance she might like to go."

"I can write to Miss Waring," put in Mrs. Carteret, "and tell her Mr. Ellis is here ; then we can all go !"

"No ; nonsense. There is no room in the carriage for four ; I object to being crowded. Marjory must stay at home."

"And I do not wish to go now," said Marjory stoutly.

"No, of course not ; you can do a little more of the catalogue while we are away," said Mr. Carteret.

"Oh no," cried Marjory, too indignant to submit to this.

"As I am not to go to the dinner you must give me a holiday."

"That is only fair," said Ellis.

"I don't like to encourage idleness," observed Mr. Carteret.

"Do you really think I am idle ?" asked Marjory, looking very straight at her uncle.

"Well—no—that is, you work very well under pressure."

Marjory made no reply ; the colour mounted to her brow and a decidedly contemptuous smile curved her lips, but she resolutely kept her eyes on her plate for a minute or two. When she raised them she encountered those of Ellis fixed on her with a curious half-smiling expression, as though studying a new specimen of human nature—an expression which had so irritating an effect upon her that Marjory was conscious of a very unladylike but strong desire to throw something at him, so strong that it warned her to draw the reins of her self-control tighter. "It will never do to show temper with such cool trained people," she thought ; and she forced herself to give Ellis a quick glance and smile, as if they understood each other, and he was laughing with, not at her.

Still it was a day of trial and mortification. She kept up gallantly till they were all gone out to dinner ; then she indulged in a fit of crying, begun in wrath and ending in sadness. Was ever any creature more alone than herself—motherless, fatherless—for was she not robbed of her father?—friendless—for who could trust to such refrigerated beings as Mr. and Mrs. Carteret,

or look for sympathy from them? Her kind schoolfellow, with whom she had spent some happy days, was married and gone, and George was at sea. Then Dick—poor dear Dick!—basely suspected and driven away. Perhaps he had gone to the Colonies or America; perhaps he is dead—dead of hardships and a broken heart!

This was the climax of her sorrowful reflections. Eager to escape from them and from herself, she seized her hat and neckerchief and set out to visit the poultry yard, having made friends with a comely matron who presided over it.

The day after Mrs. Waring's dinner Mr. Carteret found himself very unwell after his unwonted exertions; something in the dinner or the wine had upset him, and he remained in his room all the morning. Marjory, however, kept at her accustomed task in the library until she had finished all she could do without further instructions; then she mounted the steps and took down an old translation of Froissart which had fascinated her, but which she did not like to take out of the library. Armed with one of the volumes, she sat on the top of the steps and was soon deep in the curious pictures of past times given by the old chronicler. As the door was open and the carpet soft she did not hear any one enter, nor till her attention was attracted by the rustle of paper did she look up, when to her surprise she saw Ellis writing at her uncle's table. He smiled as he folded his note, seeing she was aware of his presence, and said:

"I ought to ask pardon for having stolen in in this way, but I had begun to write before I perceived you, and then I saw you were so absorbed I thought it better not to disturb you." He rose as he spoke and, coming across the room, leant against the high steps, looking up at her with the curious half-smiling expression she disliked so much. "May I ask what you are reading?"

"Froissart," she replied, wishing that he would go away and let her escape.

"Not an ordinary book for so young a lady to choose."

"It is more interesting than most novels."

"I certainly think so. But have you forgiven me for taking your place yesterday?"

"It was not your fault," with calm impartiality.

"It was not, indeed; and I assure you you lost very little. The whole affair was insufferably dull; people living here cannot possibly have anything to say. You were desperately indignant at being left behind, were you not?" smiling softly.

"I was," said Marjory steadily. "I had a right to be indignant; it was unjust to leave me behind."

"But that is no reason why you should be angry with me."

"I am not angry with you—not the least." She shut her book, but did not like to stand up and put it away while Ellis stood at the foot of the steps.

"It must be a fearful bore to be obliged to sit here all day writing the list of that rubbish."

"It is a little tiresome. And you are not wise to call '*The Collection*,' rubbish; suppose I were to tell Uncle Carteret?"

"I am not afraid; I do not think you are treacherous."

"Do not be too sure."

"Yes, *I am* sure; I think I understand you; you have a tell-tale face."

"There is not much to tell," she returned, laughing good-humouredly. "Now please let me come down; I have idled here long enough."

"Not just yet. I have something to say you may like to hear—first, Miss Waring was *very* sorry you did not come to dinner and scolded Mr. Carteret soundly—in fact, I felt as if I were an unwelcome intruder; secondly, Miss Waring intends giving a garden party, which is to end with a dance, and you are to be especially invited."

"Really!" cried Marjory, her eyes sparkling and all ideas of enmity to the speaker and prudence as to her own words scattered to the winds. "That will be delightful! Miss Waring is a dear! What else did she say?"

"A good deal, but I cannot remember her words."

"I do hope Uncle Carteret will not prevent me from going."

"I suppose," said Ellis, moving a little more in front of the steps, "if Mr. Carteret is your uncle I am a relative—a cousin more or less removed."

"Perhaps so," returned Marjory, in no way elated. "But these sort of things are not easy to understand."

"Then you will not have me for a kinsman?"

"Well, it is not much matter. You will be going away; so shall I; and we shall probably never meet again."

"What a heartless speech!" (laughing). "I fear I have unconsciously done something to prejudice you against me."

"I never know whether you are in earnest or not. Though it is not really of any consequence—at all events, you have brought me some pleasant news. Now stand away—I must come down!" this very decidedly.

Ellis drew back.

"Are you not very immovable?" he said. "You ought to be gracious to me in this dreary land; say you will accept me as a kinsman and try to like me!"

"Try to like you?" echoed Marjory. "Would trying be any good? I always jump into liking or disliking without exactly knowing why."

"Then I trust in my case you are for once hesitating on the brink before you plunge into the fatal abyss of dislike?"

Marjory laughed merrily, then hesitated. She did not want to go up the steps to put away her book, nor would she venture to

take it with her; so turning to Ellis she gave it to him, saying, "Will you be so kind as to put that in its place for me? Uncle does not like his books taken out of the library." With a smile and a little quick bend of the head she left him looking after her with the book in his hand.

"She is uncommonly pretty and brimful of saucy spirit," he thought. "It is droll to find myself condescended to by a little school-girl, after being a spoiled child in Vienna drawing-rooms. It would be rather amusing to instruct her ignorance; she has pluck and brains, I suspect, and might turn out a leading woman; as it is, she will marry some curate or fatted calf of a farmer and be lost to social life. If I had time I should certainly cultivate her and tame her pretty daring. It is a long time since I saw anything so fresh and so amusing."

This encounter enlivened Marjory; but she was still more cheered by a visit from Mrs. and Miss Waring, when both expressed their regret that she had not come to dinner. Then the latter proposed to walk through the grounds and to the ruins, where she had not been for a long time. Marjory gladly ran to get her hat, and the two elder ladies were left to keep each other company.

They had hardly reached the ruins when Ellis joined them, and Marjory listened with interest to the talk which ensued, her eyes fixed admiringly on Miss Waring's face, quite regardless of the tact with which Ellis tried to draw her into the conversation. The topics they discussed were new to her. At length Ellis said something about going to town on Monday, and Miss Waring exclaimed, "I hope you intend to return for my party, Mr. Ellis."

"You may count on me; I am only going for a week or ten days. I want to see my chief and buy a horse. Mr. Carteret's stud is extremely limited, and if I stay over the 12th I shall want a couple of dogs."

"I did not think you would stay so long in England."

"I find it necessary. At present, you see, I am unattached, and while free I wish to guide Mr. Carteret in the way he should go. He wants a good deal of guidance, does he not?" looking at Marjory.

"Oh no," she said demurely, "he can guide every one. I am sure he takes a great deal of trouble with me!"

"Which I am sure you are delighted to give," he returned.

"Then I may expect to see you," said Miss Waring. "I intend to send out my invitations next week."

"I shall be sure to come, among other reasons, to do my duty by dancing with my cousin, Miss Acland."

"I did not know you were related."

"We are, I assure you; though Miss Acland will neither acknowledge me nor assist me in tracing the tangled threads of our kinship."

"I am surprised," said Miss Waring smiling. "I think you would be rather nice as a cousin."

Ellis raised his hat.

"I know very little about relations," cried Marjory colouring. "I never met any but Uncle Carteret—of course, except my brothers, and they are part of myself."

"How many have you?" asked Miss Waring.

"Two—George and Dick. Dick is only my half-brother." She quite forgot the existence of little Herbert.

"My mother will think I have forgotten her," said Miss Waring, rising; and they walked slowly to the house.

The few days which intervened before Ellis went to town were certainly pleasanter to Marjory, thanks to him. He looked over "The Catalogue" and praised it. He assured Uncle Carteret it was admirably planned, and advised that no further alterations should be made. He frequently spoke in a frank friendly way to Marjory, and put Mrs. Carteret in high good humour by complimenting her on the taste with which she dressed her *protégée*.

This sort of recognition on the part of so important a person as Vere Ellis gave Marjory more trust in herself; she began to have a sense of self-reliance which was new and comforting.

The evening before Ellis was to go up to town she had slipped away, as she often did, to look at the sunset and breathe the sweet evening air. She was slowly following the path to the river, when she perceived the perfume of a cigar, and a few steps further came face to face with Ellis.

"I thought I should find you here," he said, turning with her. "Tell me what fairing shall I bring you from great Vanity Fair?"

"Oh! nothing, thank you; I really do not want anything."

"Then you stand alone among women! Have you no commission to give me? I have two or three from Miss Waring. Must I choose for you, Marjory?"

She turned and looked full at him with surprise and displeasure.

"What! may I not call you by your pretty quaint old English name?" He laughed quite good-humouredly and threw away his cigar.

"No, I would rather you did not," said Marjory quietly. "I do not call *you* by your Christian name, and it is not right that you should be more familiar than I am."

"Very well, my proud kinswoman; but I should be charmed if you would call me Ralph—my name would sound very sweet spoken by you."

"That is nonsense," said Marjory gravely. "I could not call you by your name—not if I knew you all my life; it would seem quite unnatural."

"Now it seems quite natural to *me* to call you Marjory; perhaps because I think of you as Marjory," stealing a look at her.

"Well, I do not like it," she returned unmoved.

"Very well, Miss Acland, I shall not offend." They walked on for a few paces, then Marjory said suddenly and softly, "I dare say you think me a stupid ill-tempered girl, for I believe I ought to thank you for inducing Uncle Carteret to let me finish that tiresome catalogue without further alterations. I am indeed obliged to you." She looked at him with sweet shy eyes, very unlike her usual quick distrustful glances.

"Believe me, I am very glad to be of any use to you; and I fancy that catalogue was enough to turn your hair grey, Miss Acland."

"It was indeed." A pause; then with an effort Marjory spoke: "You might help me a little more if you liked."

"How?"

"When the catalogue is quite done I am afraid my uncle may not want me—send me away."

"Great heavens! Do you wish to stay *here*?"

"Yes, very much."

"May I ask where you live when at home? In a ladies' boarding school or a nunnery?"

"I live in my father's house."

"Is it very indiscreet to ask if you are kept locked up and fed on bread and water?"

Marjory laughed frankly and shook her head, then she cast down her eyes a little sadly and said, "I have no mother, and my father is married again." Ellis looked at her very intently while her eyes were averted; he felt a sudden interest in the details of her life. "Then I am rather sorry for your father's wife," he returned, stooping to disentangle her dress from a broken branchlet which had caught in it, and speaking in a pleasant playful tone; "I think you might be rather a formidable step-daughter."

"Why? How curious! I don't think I am naturally disagreeable; but if—I am struck on one cheek, I do *not* feel inclined to turn the other!"

"Of that I am quite certain. So you do not care to live at home? Pray tell me how I can help you to avoid it."

"Suggest something else for me to do."

"With pleasure. I would willingly keep you here if I could. What shall it be? You must assist me; though why you should imagine Mr. Carteret is ready to return you to the paternal jail I cannot understand."

"Well, you see, he never grew fond of me!"

"No? Very strange! Then I do not think Mr. Carteret's heart is of the clinging order. He is not given to entertaining devoted attachments."

Marjory laughed. "No, not exactly; and I am sure he will not let me stay unless I am of some use. Mrs. Carteret is quite different; she really likes me—at least I think she does—or I should not care so much for her."

"Ah! Do you always return love for love?"

"Yes, I am sure I do."

"A very charming disposition," said Ellis meditatively.

"Suppose," resumed Marjory, "I were to make a fresh list of the books?"

"What! have you the resolution to face another catalogue?"

"It would not be half so bad as the first one. And I love books; but as for those dusty broken curiosities——"

"Let us not be blasphemous," said Ellis. "Your suggestion is excellent. I shall act upon it; and at any rate, if you want to stay here, here you shall stay."

"Thank you very much."

"Thank *you*," returned Ellis gravely; "I consider your asking even this trifle a token of amity."

"I think it is," said Marjory. "I think I am too hasty, and I fancied when you came first——" she stopped abruptly.

"Pray finish your sentence; I am all anxiety to know what special injustice you have done me."

"I thought you cold and contemptuous; I never thought you could be good-natured, and *this* is being good-natured."

"Cold!" repeated Ellis, laughing a low peculiar laugh. "Well, conscience does not endorse your accusation; let me hope I may improve on acquaintance. What, are you going back to the house? Let us stroll a little further along the river. The evening is delicious."

"I should like it very much," she returned, "but I cannot stay. Mrs. Carteret likes the newspaper read to her about this time and will expect me; and my uncle will look for his game of chess."

"Which he shall have when I am ready," said Ellis smiling. "You will go then?" he held out his hand; "shall we swear eternal friendship first?"

"Eternal friendship! that is quite too tremendous," cried Marjory; "possible friendship if you like—there's my hand on't," she touched his quickly and was gone.

Ellis lit a fresh cigar and sauntered on, thinking idly. "Pretty wood-nymph! is it ignorance or strength that keeps her so steady and indifferent. There's something about her like the flavour of wild strawberries, their delicate fragrance, their slight piquant acidity. She is worth waking up. There's plenty of fire and tenderness beneath her outer icing. Old Carteret bristles with difficulties of another order, but I shall not leave till I have bent him to my will. What infernally good care he takes of himself; he intends to live these thirty years! How irrational it is to allow useless individuals to stand in the way of more capable men. I suppose the progress of common sense will some day develop the practice of Euthanasia."

Mr. Carteret fumed and fussed while waiting for his chess, but

Ellis was too absorbed in his own thoughts and schemes to remember his host.

Ellis was an ambitious man, strong-willed and capable of working patiently for an end. He was also capable of self-mastery if self-interest demanded it; and though gifted—or troubled—with strong passions, he rarely let the reins of government slip from his grasp. He liked his pleasures, as he liked his food and wine, to be of the very best and most perfect description. Nothing common or unclean suited his palate. In society he was perhaps more esteemed than universally popular, and although the few women he sought returned his preference with devotion, he was not generally considered a “lady’s man.”

He was by no means indifferent to women, only they were from his life things quite apart; he deliberately considered women as created by beneficent nature for the convenience and gratification of the superior animal: this is the unconscious and unavowed belief of many fairly good fellows, but with Ellis it was acknowledged and acted on with full unhesitating conviction. Still, something of character was necessary to complete a woman’s charm for him. He did not like dolls, so in general very young girls were not to his taste. But character, intellect, beauty, tenderness were only of value so far as they enhanced his enjoyment; of a woman’s right to her own individuality he had no idea. In short he took Milton’s view of the subject—“He for God only, she for God in him.”

At present he was interested and much amused with Marjory. Her untutored grace, her speaking eyes, her varying expression charmed him; her resistance to his advances, her indifference to his quiet but constant efforts to please and soothe her, nettled him. He had more serious matter for thought, however, and his schemes for the future pushed lighter and pleasanter topics from his mind.

While Ellis was away, Marjory was surprised to find how much she missed him. Indeed his absence was felt by others besides Marjory. Mr. Carteret was querulous and irritating to an intolerable degree—wanting the restraining influence of his kinsman’s presence; and Mrs. Carteret was more silent than usual.

In short every one was pleased when Ralph Ellis notified his intention of returning, and sent as his precursors a horse, a groom and two dogs.

Mr. Carteret looked not too well pleased at these additions to his establishment, but to Marjory’s amusement he uttered no audible objection.

She made acquaintance with the dogs on the morning after their arrival, and took a great fancy to one—a young brown and white setter, of playful habits and caressing manners; but the groom would not permit her to feed or pet him, explaining respectfully that “he was a young dawg, and not half edicated yet.”

Finally Ellis himself made his appearance, arriving so late that Marjory had retired before he reached the Priory.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUND!

THE eagerly anticipated party at Dene Court was at hand, and Marjory's measure of content was amply filled by an invitation from Miss Waring to stay with her for a day both before and after that event, which invitation Mr. and Mrs. Carteret permitted her to accept, as neither cared to risk fatigue or late hours.

The friendly Virginie busied herself in beautifying a very simple muslin frock, making it fit for so grand an occasion; and Marjory's very vivid imagination depicted impossible glories and romantic situations at the coming festivity.

This preoccupation did not prevent her from feeling very pleased when the day after his return Ellis presented her with a beautifully bound copy of Tennyson's "Idylls of the King."

"As you would give no clue to your tastes, I was obliged to follow my own poor judgment," he said; "and seeing you are a lover of books—" he held out the volume.

"Oh, thank you very much. How good of you to think of me, I could like nothing better—indeed I never had anything so beautiful before. Is it not beautiful, Aunt Carteret?" cried Marjory with blushing cheeks and sparkling eyes (the presentation took place before their hostess).

"Very nice indeed; very kind of Mr. Ellis," returned Aunt Carteret.

"Do you know Tennyson?" asked Ellis.

"Very little. One of the girls at school had his early poems for a prize and let me have them to read, but she grew afraid I should spoil the binding from constantly holding it open, so she took it away. But it was not to be compared to this, and there are pictures too!" She sat down to examine them on the spot.

Mrs. Carteret smiled indulgently.

"It has evidently been a most fortunate choice," she said.

Ellis sat down on the ottoman partly behind Marjory, and looked at the illustrations over her shoulder, while Mrs. Carteret, who was going to pay some formal visits, left the room.

"You must put my name in it," said Marjory, as Ellis returned from seeing Mrs. Carteret off and resumed his place half behind her.

"I am glad I have succeeded in pleasing you for once," returned Ellis, leaning over her shoulder to see a pretty sylphlike figure of Enid.

"There, that has a look of yourself; a considerably stronger likeness than you have of Uncle Carteret."

"What, that beautiful airy creature like *me*," cried Marjory. "How the boys would laugh if they heard you. You need not say such wonderful things to 'make up.' I am quite ready to be friends without that."

"But it *is* like you! I say it is," repeated Ellis. "Let me see!" He seized the book as if to get a better view, and with it Marjory's hand: "Yes! the figure especially."

Marjory laughed merrily: "I am glad you think so." She turned her head as she spoke, and found her cheek almost touching his; she shrunk back. "I beg your pardon, I nearly knocked you," she said. Somehow the close proximity, the warmth of his breath on her neck, the faint fragrance of tobacco which hung about him affected her strangely, her heart beat, and an odd feeling of fear, against which she indignantly revolted, shot through her. Starting up she exclaimed, "There is no ink here; come into the library." Now in the library was Uncle Carteret, to whom an explanation must be offered. He remarked viciously that a fool and his money were soon parted, and that Marjory would probably never read the book, "or if she does will have a very hazy notion of the contents."

"I am not quite so stupid as you think, uncle," began Marjory indignantly; then a quick flash of thought suggested the folly of being angry with so perverse an old egotist—of displaying impatience before Ellis, who had followed her, and she added in a different tone, "Even if I were, I suppose talking with you and writing with you for the last six weeks ought to have brightened me up!"

"Well, it ought," growled Uncle Carteret.

Ellis seated himself at the writing-table, and as Marjory placed the book before him he looked up into her eyes and whispered, "Bravo."

"Thank you again very much," said Marjory, taking her book when he had written her name, adding "From R. V. E.," and carried it off to her own room.

A colder-hearted girl than Marjory might have been conciliated by such kindly efforts to please, and she *did* take Ellis into favour; but across this friendly mood flitted a vague helpless fear, a misty distrust, which a moment's thought dispersed, only to gather up its vapours again as soon as the dispelling force was withdrawn.

Only one day now intervened between Marjory and her delightful visit. It was mid-July; some heavy showers had relieved the air, and also created fears for the success of Miss Waring's outdoor *fête*, which depended on the weather.

Marjory, returning from the dairy, whither she had gone with a message from Mrs. Carteret, made a little *détour* through the shrubberies, to enjoy some quiet castle building and the fresh dampness of grass and foliage.

As she approached a gate which led into the woods beyond, the

howls of a dog as if in pain and fear startled her. She paused and then ran quickly through the gate in the direction of the sound. Turning round a large tree into the wet grass, she beheld her favourite setter crouching on the ground, held firmly by Ellis with one hand, while with the other he beat the animal severely with his dog-whip. His expression was coldly composed, not the smallest tinge of anger to excuse the severity of the punishment.

"Why do you beat that poor dog?" she exclaimed.

"Because," returned Ellis deliberately, after administering a few final lashes and then letting the dog go,—“because he must be taught obedience; he must learn to keep at heel when told.”

"I am sure you are naturally cruel! It was not necessary to hurt him so much. Could you not teach him by kindness?"

"Not half so effectually as by cruelty! I am not cruel, but if it is necessary to be cruel, why, it's folly to mince matters."

"You looked as if you liked it," cried Marjory contemptuously and flaming with indignation. Ellis laughed.

"You don't understand, my dear Miss Acland. A dog must be licked into shape, any one will tell you the same thing. You will find Tatters quite ready to make friends with me in a minute or two. Which way are you going?" and he turned with her towards the house.

Marjory could not speak; she feared showing too much indignation.

"Confess now you would like to thrash me within an inch of my life?" said Ellis smiling.

"Yes! I should very, very much," returned Marjory quickly, with such unmistakable sincerity that Ellis could not restrain a laugh. He offered her the whip, saying, "I will take whatever punishment you choose to inflict, *provided* you give me my revenge after!" Their eyes met as he said this, and again a wild sense of fear, for which she despised herself the next instant, thrilled through her. Was she growing a senseless coward?

"You do not accept my offer?" he continued as she did not speak. "Come, I don't like you to think me a monster! I assure you I am not—I am no worse than other men if not much better. As to the dog, he is none the worse. Here, Tatters, Tatters!" The dog came timidly and fawned upon him: "You see."

"Yes," returned Marjory, who felt disgracefully inclined to cry from a curious mixture of feeling, "I see, and I feel ashamed of so poor-spirited a creature! he ought to have bitten you! Perhaps you would not have beaten him so hard had you not known he would have been ready to fawn on you."

"You are a very dangerous young lady! It would be no trifle to offend you. It is not easy to mollify you, as I know."

"I really do believe you are naturally cruel. I felt it the moment I looked at you, and I would rather walk alone—I would indeed."

"Why, Marjory? I mean Miss Acland."

"Oh! I daresay I am foolish and prejudiced, perhaps rude, but I am *not* angry—not now; you have made me feel quite miserable. I do not think either George or Dick would have beaten a dog as you did, not just in the same way."

"I am very unfortunate!" cried Ellis, half in earnest. "Now I suppose you will not 'make up,' as you call it, for ages, and I am going away to Beaulieu to-morrow; we shall not meet again till Miss Waring's party. Will you not shake hands?"

"Nonsense, Mr. Ellis! What can you care about it? I cannot shake hands with you! Good-bye; do not kill your poor dog before we meet again." She opened the gate as she spoke and ran swiftly down the shrubbery towards the house.

Ellis stood looking after her half amused, half vexed. "What a provoking, sensitive, obstinate girl! But she is less indifferent than she was. Yes, dislike is a better beginning than indifference. She was almost in tears. I wonder why?"

* * * * *

Marjory was very quiet and undemonstrative for the whole of the evening and kept close to her aunt, but when not reading aloud to that lady perused the copy of Tennyson Ellis had given her. Ellis himself talked a good deal about foreign politics to Mr. Carteret, who had driven over to Market Gilston that day and had consequently to write "letters of importance" in the privacy of his own study. So Ellis went out to smoke, and Marjory saw no more of him, except for a few minutes at breakfast next morning, until they met at Dene Court.

Lord Beaulieu, whose guest Ellis was to be for the next few days, had, as was said before, succeeded his nephew, a sickly lad, who died a few years before when only eighteen, and so permitted the revenues of the estate to accumulate largely.

The present lord had led an easy artistic life as an impecunious younger brother, chiefly in Italy and the south of France. He was rather bored than elated when the death of his predecessor raised him to rank and riches. Nevertheless he proceeded to enjoy himself as much in his old way as his altered circumstances permitted.

The old castle at Beaulieu had been kept up after a fashion, that is, it had not been permitted to fall into decay; but what repairs were needful had been done with a niggardly hand and with utter disregard of the fitness of things. Lord Beaulieu therefore decided on complete restoration in harmony with original design. This was begun and carried out so thoroughly that at the time of which we write there were not more than four or five rooms left habitable in the edifice. Here Lord Beaulieu dwelt contentedly, conferring with the architect, the clerk of the works, and an artist whom he had known abroad and whom he had brought with him after a short visit to Paris, from which place

he had just returned. To this gentleman was confided the interior decorations; but the architect and director in chief was Lord Beaulieu himself. Here among stones, bricks, dust, mortar and workmen Lord Beaulieu was happy.

Ellis had been known to him in Italy; and he was very glad to renew his acquaintance with the accomplished *attaché* whose opinion in artistic matters he considered sound. The time passed agreeably, examining the works, discussing the plans, and fishing. The two men had plenty to talk about, and there was just that difference in their tastes and knowledge which gave zest to conversation.

The days, then, before the Dene Court party passed swiftly. But, alas! the day itself broke in storm and rain; nor did the weather improve as the hours rolled on.

In view of the uncertainty of the weather the invitations requested that, if the weather proved unpropitious for a garden party, the guests were requested to assemble later for a dance and supper. Lord Beaulieu, though not much disposed for such festivities, was too kindly a neighbour not to show himself at Mrs. Waring's house. He too had known her and her daughter abroad when he was a Bohemian artist not too well off, and he had always been an ally of Miss Waring.

The dance was in full swing when Ellis and his host arrived. Dances in Gilston and its vicinity were few and far between, and the local *belles* and *beaux* eagerly seized the opportunity offered.

Dene Court was a fine house of the Queen Anne period, with a large inner hall, which was used as an impromptu ball-room, a gallery at the back affording a convenient place for the musicians. It was well lighted, plentifully decorated with flowers and, with the moving crowd of many-coloured dancers, made an effective picture.

Miss Waring received her guests in the drawing-room, where Mrs. Waring, who took little or no part in the entertainment, was comfortably established on a sofa, where her special friends came to speak with her.

"I suppose I need not offer to introduce you to partners?" said Miss Waring after some little conversation with the last arrivals.

"No, thank you; I am no dancer," said Lord Beaulieu.

"Well I am. It is part of an *attaché's* duty," added Ellis; "but as every one seems afoot I shall look on for the present."

"It is quite a country assemblage," said Miss Waring; "none of our London-going neighbours have returned yet."

Other guests claiming her attention, Ellis and Lord Beaulieu strolled back to the hall, where the former soon perceived Marjory, who was going through the lancers under the guidance of a very boyish-looking young man with a fair open face. She was looking her best. Pleasure and excitement had given her a rich colour, which heightened the brilliancy of her eyes; her abundant chestnut brown hair formed a sufficient coiffure; her simple frock of

creamy muslin was gracefully draped ; the open corsage, with its modest cascade of lace, had for its only ornament a spray of crimson roses, their dark green leaves lying against her soft white skin.

It was some time before she recognized Ellis, for she was evidently on the best possible terms with her partner. They laughed and talked and made endless mistakes in the figures of the dance ; but Ellis watched with a degree of pleasure that surprised himself the natural grace of her movements. "I think I may venture to waltz with her," he thought ; "she ought to make an admirable dancer."

The lancers over, the performers slowly filed past to the refreshment and other rooms, and presently Marjory and her partner came up.

"I think you intended to cut me !" said Ellis smiling as he held out his hand ; "but I will not submit to such treatment."

"No, indeed I did not !" giving hers ; "I saw you just now, and was looking round for you."

There was such an unusual expression of soft happiness in her eyes, of kindness in her tone, that Ellis asked himself with a curious sense of irritation, "Is this cub some boyish lover who has unexpectedly turned up ?"

"I need not ask if you are enjoying this gay and festive scene ?"

"It is perfectly delightful !" cried Marjory, with emphasis on "perfectly." "Do you know, I have danced everything !"

"I quite believe it," with a grave bow. "Pray can you spare me a waltz ?"

"I am not sure," taking her programme from her waistband and consulting it seriously.

"The next is a polka, and you have promised it to me !" cried her partner, looking over the card.

"Yes, I know ; and then there is a waltz. I am engaged to some one, I cannot make out the name."

"Persons who do not write legibly do not count ; put my name in his place."

"Oh no, I could not do that !"

"I know who it was, Miss Acland," cried the cub. "It was that old grey buffer Miss Waring introduced to you. He is a stranger. I know all the men about here ; he's not one of them."

"Then the dance after," urged Ellis, taking the programme.

"I am afraid I do not waltz well enough for you," said Marjory, smiling upon him.

"Allow me to find that out for myself," said Ellis, putting his initials against one of the few unappropriated dances.

"If you don't come along, Miss Acland, you'll have no time for an ice before the polka begins."

"That would never do," exclaimed Marjory, yielding to the onward movement of her partner, but turning her head as she went to throw a bright arch glance at Ellis.

"That is a deucedly pretty girl," exclaimed Lord Beaulieu, who stood behind him. "Who is she? a stranger? I do not know her face."

"She is related to old Carteret, his niece or grand-niece, and is staying at the Priory."

"She would make an admirable model. What an expressive face! I should like to sketch her."

"She is a mere school-girl," said Ellis carelessly, and he went away to talk with Miss Waring.

At last his turn came, and Ellis smiled to himself when he remembered the last dance at which he had figured, the urbane highly trained fascinating women of the world whose cavalier he had been. Nevertheless he was conscious of a certain keen sense of pleasure in the prospect of a waltz with simple untutored Marjory Acland, mere school-girl though she was.

"This is a quadrille," said he as he offered her his arm; "you cannot want to dance it. You ought to rest, and then give me the waltz which follows."

"Very well; I am a little tired."

"There is a boudoir or some such place hereabouts, where we can be quiet," he said; "this place is insufferably hot." He led her to a small drawing-room opening upon a balcony.

The night had cleared, the clouds rolled away, and a fine moon was shining over the woods and fields visible from the windows.

"It is better here, is it not?" asked Ellis.

"Yes, for a little while. It is so cool and dim," said Marjory, sinking on a sofa and feeling she needed the refreshment of a brief rest.

"So you have been having such a good time, as the Americans say, that you extend plenary absolution even to so great a malefactor as myself?"

"Yes; at present I cannot feel vexed with any one."

"Something especially pleasant has happened to produce so much sunshine; I read it in your eyes—your smile?"

"You are right; something very delightful has happened, though I am a little uneasy. I had a letter from my brother this morning. He is safe in London and wants to come and see me!"

"Oh, indeed! Which of your brothers?"

"George."

"How long has he been away?"

"A year and three months. He is not to be long in England, and I *do* want to see him so much."

"Well, can he not come down to the Priory?"

"I daresay he has money enough for his railway fare, but—but I am afraid Uncle Carteret would not like him to come."

"Why should he object?"

"I do not know. He would not be pleased, perhaps, if I asked leave for him to come, yet he will never think of inviting him if it is not put into his head."

"I see," gravely. "It is a difficult question, and requires diplomatic handling. I fancy you require my help?"

Marjory hesitated, drew off her glove nervously, and then with a little embarrassed laugh said, "Yes, I know you could help me, but I am half ashamed to—to ask you, because I have been—been rather rude to you, and what is worse, I don't feel particularly sorry for it."

"That is a great aggravation undoubtedly," returned Ellis gravely. "And you have been dreadfully rude, you know."

"No, not dreadfully."

"Will you answer me one question candidly?—I promise not to be offended by any explanation: Why do you dislike me?"

"I don't know," dropped from Marjory's lips before she could stop the words. "That is," blushing vividly, "I do not dislike you, I am sure I do not, exactly——"

"There, that is quite enough! I am very thankful you do not know why you dislike me. There is some hope that a prejudice so unfounded may melt away in time."

"You see," said Marjory looking straight at him and recovering her self-possession, "I do not quite understand you, I don't feel sure. And, oh! do not let us talk of disagreeable things on this delightful evening; I think you have been quite kind, and I was beginning to think I should like you, only—that dog."

"But, Marjory, that is utter folly."

"Very well, perhaps so."

"Then you will not ask my help?"

"No; but if you choose to give it I shall be grateful."

"Very good. And we are to be friends?"

"Yes, if you care to be friends with me."

"Well, it is a curious fact, but I *do* care. Come, they are playing a capital waltz, it was a great favourite in Vienna. Where did you learn to dance?" and he led her towards the hall.

"Some of my school-fellows taught me. They had a French lady to teach them, but I was never allowed to have extra lessons, that is why I am so ignorant and——"

"Look on this picture!" interrupted Ellis, pausing before a long glass and pointing to her reflection in it. "Do you think profound knowledge or high accomplishments are very essential to so charming a personage?"

Marjory withdrew her arm from his, annoyed at what she considered a piece of impertinence. "I want something *in* my head for my own sake," she said. "And you are ever so much nicer when you are not sarcastic."

"Sarcastic! I protest you do me the greatest injustice. I am wholly and sincerely in earnest! Did none of your other partners convey to you their conviction that you are the *belle* of the evening? not even the pretty boy who carried you off for the polka?"

"The pretty boy!" laughing, partly mollified yet still dis-

trustful. "He is a naval officer; he is delightful! I like him so much. No, he did not talk nonsense."

"It must be trying to exchange him for an idiot like me."

Marjory laughed again very merrily. "He is staying here," she said; "he is the rector's youngest son, and he says he will come and see me, but I told him he must not."

"What audacity!" exclaimed Ellis. "We shall lose that waltz if you delay longer."

When this was over a country dance was proposed.

"A country dance!" exclaimed Ellis. "You would not think of such a violent performance; it requires muscles of iron, staying power of the highest order. No, you had better come back to that pleasant nook we discovered, and let us discuss our plans about your brother."

"Very well," said Marjory with some reluctance; and they returned to the dimly-lighted room which Ellis found so much to his taste. It was no longer empty, however, as many couples were sitting and standing about.

"What have you done with your other brother—what is his name?" asked Ellis as they paused beside a window through which the moonlit grounds were visible.

"Dick? Ah, I do not know what has become of Dick," sadly. "He quarrelled with his mother and went away more than a year ago; we have never heard of him since."

"Then I am afraid he is the scamp of the family."

"Indeed, indeed, he is not! He is so quiet and steady, and everything that is good."

"What a dangerous character! Still waters run deep."

"Oh! of course you laugh at me; but if you knew Dick!"

"I should endorse your opinion? Perhaps. Meantime you had better sit down and rest, while our *convives* are prancing." He pointed to a lounge which stood invitingly near. The sound of a brisk air summoned the loiterers who had been hanging about, and Ellis had begun a sentence when to his great disgust the young naval officer came quickly into the room, looking eagerly round as if in search of some one. "Ah! there you are, Miss Acland," he exclaimed; "I have been looking everywhere for you; they are just going to have a jolly country dance—I think you promised it to me."

"I do not think I could, for I did not know we were to have a country dance."

"Well, I am sure my name is down for No. 13. May I see your card? Aye, there it is, only they have changed it to a country-dance. Come along, our *vis-à-vis* are waiting."

"Miss Acland is very tired and intended to rest, I believe," said Ellis blandly.

"I feel rested already, and the music sounds delightful," cried the faithless Marjory, rising and accepting the arm offered her,

with a pretty deprecating look to Ellis, and went off cheerfully with the interloper.

"Deserted, by Jove!" thought the former, with an impatient frown, which was almost immediately succeeded by a smile. "I thought I was beginning to make some way; and I believe she is just as well pleased with that insignificant sailor boy as with my noble and experienced self. She is the first woman I ever met who seems to have an innate distrust of me."

* * * * *

It was all over at last. But when Marjory shut to the door of her own room, she did not begin to undress. She lit the candles which were attached to a large cheval glass and looked at herself very deliberately; then a well pleased smile parted her lips and a tangled succession of thoughts stirred her brain. First came a comfortable conviction that she did not look so badly; next, that she had danced everything, and four times with that nice young sailor; finally, that Mr. Ellis had danced with her, and only with her! moreover that he was really, truly, genuinely vexed when her favourite partner had carried her off. That was a triumph! If so cool and indifferent an individual, a man of the world, the great world, a future ambassador, took the trouble of talking to her insignificant self, he must think her rather nice, for she could not credit him with abstract good nature. The remembrance so exhilarated her that she performed a *pas seul* before the mirror and laughed aloud merrily, while she blushed at her own folly. "It would be such fun if he were to take a fancy to me (of course it would only be a passing fancy) and to show him that although he is a great man (comparatively) and I am a mere nobody I do not and will not care a straw about him! I must be very nice, though, when I go back, if he gets an invitation for George. Oh! how delightful it will be to see George. Dear George! I wonder if he will be able to find out anything about Dick." She stood a moment or two, her face softened and sobered, then she undressed quickly, blew out the candles and went to bed.

Next day, however, inexorable fate overtook Marjory in the shape of Aunt Carteret, who had been despatched to recall her. Mr. Carteret had decided on making a new alphabetical list of his books, and he was determined to begin the very next day. So Marjory could no longer be excused.

Ellis also returned in time for dinner, and before going to table contrived to give Marjory a hint that it would be well to broach the question of George's visit at once. This she did with some trepidation. Her announcement that her brother had come home from sea did not arouse much attention from Mr. Carteret. But Ellis took up the running.

"Your brother has come home, do you say, Miss Acland?" he said audibly. "I suppose you want to run up to town to see him?"

"I want to see him very much indeed," faltered Marjory.

"How—what?" cried Mr. Carteret. "Go to town. Certainly not. Why, we begin the catalogue of books to-morrow, and it would be very bad behaviour on your part, Marjory, if you were to absent yourself now that I have taught you to be a little useful."

"I do not want to go away, uncle, but I do want to see my brother."

"Then he had better come down here," suggested Ellis.

This proposition seemed to startle Uncle Carteret; but as Ellis appeared to think it a matter of course and Mrs. Carteret made no objection, he gave a peevish assent.

"George need not be in the way at all, uncle," said Marjory, eagerly. "He can ramble about the place in the morning and walk with me when I have done writing, and only for a couple of days, you know." The ladies were leaving the dining-room as she spoke, and Ellis shook his head at her. Later, when he found an opportunity, he lectured Marjory on her imprudence. "Such a speech is always unwise. It gives a man like old Carteret an exaggerated idea of his own benevolence. Take such things as natural and of course, as if it was or ought to be a pleasure to him to invite any relative of yours."

"But it is not," cried Marjory.

"No matter; you can credit him with proper sentiments. Now have I not returned good for evil? Have I not kept my word in spite of your base desertion of me last night?"

"You know you did not want to dance the country dance."

"Did you?"

"Yes; I never was at a party before."

"You ought to have preferred sitting out with me."

"Why should I?" asked Marjory, opening her innocent-looking eyes.

"Oh, because—because *I* wished it."

"That is no reason in my opinion. There, Uncle Carteret is putting out the chess-men."

"Ah," Ellis advanced to his host, "I fear I must trouble Miss Acland to take my place, sir," he said. "I have some important letters to write, and must send my man over to Market Gilston with them. Have you anything for the night mail?" Marjory gave him a reproachful glance. "Lord Beaulieu desired me to say he wished you would drive over and look at the alterations and restorations he is making. He would like the opinion of such a judge as he knows you to be."

"Ah, indeed, I am sure his lordship is very welcome to any advice I can give him. I daresay there is much to amend in the plans. I am told he employs none but Englishmen. If to-morrow is fine we will drive over to Beaulieu."

"To-morrow" was fine. They started, therefore, immediately after luncheon; and Marjory found the scenery, the air, the perfume of the new-mown grass—everything, in short, delightful.

In her heart she conjectured what the answer to the invitation would be. It was more than probable that Mrs. Acland might be propitious, as she seemed anxious to stand well with the Carterets. Once or twice when roused from her thoughts, Marjory had caught Ellis's eyes, as if he had been contemplating her, and she had given him a friendly grateful glance and smile, remembering the good service he had done her.

Mr. Carteret discoursed on Gothic *versus* Classic style, and proved to his own satisfaction that the former was distinctly barbarous.

Arrived at the park gates, the gentlemen alighted, and then Ellis, as if moved by some sudden thought, asked Mrs. Carteret, who was going on to pay a visit, "Do you want Miss Acland very much? If not, she may like to see Beaulieu."

"Oh yes, she can go if she likes."

"Thank you. I should greatly like to go."

"Hey—what?" said Uncle Carteret. "You can carry my sketch-book and case of pencils then."

Ellis led them across the park, under the stately oaks and graceful beech trees, which grew singly or in clumps, through which they caught glimpses of the deer browsing in groups.

"Give me your arm, Marjory," said Mr. Carteret. "I had no idea it was so far, Ralph, and it is extremely hot."

"We will get round to the east end directly and find shade," returned Ellis.

"Ah, there is the castle!" cried Marjory. "How fine it looks, rising above the trees."

"It will be very fine when finished. They are busy about the chapel now; it had quite fallen into decay."

In a few minutes they ascended a smooth green bank, and following the edge of what had been the moat, now a sunken shrubbery, turned an angle and found themselves in a busy scene.

Workmen were sawing stones, chipping stones, laying courses of stones with ringing trowels. Heaps of mortar lay about, some being mixed, others ready. Men were climbing ladders, putting up scaffolding.

"I do not see Beaulieu about," said Ellis. "I will look for him; he would not like to miss you."

As he turned to go, he was struck by Marjory's startled expression and heightened colour.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Look," she exclaimed excitedly, "do you see that man who is standing by a heap of mortar there?"

"Yes, a tall good-looking young fellow."

"It is—it is Dick!" cried Marjory, dropping pencils and sketch-book recklessly and darting forward to clasp his mortar-splashed, dust-begrimed hands. "Oh, Dick, have you forgotten me? I am so glad! I thought I should never see you again."

(To be continued.)

COUNT TOLSTOI'S "MEMORIES."

PERHAPS the most remarkable event in the annals of recent romance has been the sudden growth of interest in Muscovite fiction. Ten years ago Tourguénief was already accessible through the medium of good French and indifferent English translations, and was admitted by the *Athenæum* to occupy the foremost rank amongst contemporary novelists. His occasional visits to these shores, coupled with his wonderful personal charm and noble appearance, helped also to spread his well-earned fame. But at that epoch the readers of Tolstoi might have been counted by tens, and of Dostoieffsky probably on the-fingers of one hand. At the hour we write there are no books more actively canvassed amongst intelligent readers than the masterpieces of the two authors we have just named. "Anna Karénine" is seen on the drawing-room table of every second house we enter, and if it is not actually *en évidence*, is pretty sure to be discussed should the subject of new books crop up. Fewer readers have had the perseverance to tackle "War and Peace," but the numerical proportion of the readers of these two books admirably illustrates the proverbial remark about the wisdom of the majority. Others again are champions à l'outrance of the claims of Dostoieffsky and go so far as to declare that of the three great Russian writers named he is the best suited to achieve popularity with English readers. To such a view we are obliged to demur, holding for several reasons that neither Tolstoi nor Dostoieffsky are ever destined to become even as popular as Tourguénief. The last-named writer is by far the most cosmopolitan of the three as he is the most finished artist. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of the life depicted in the pages of Tolstoi, and still more so in those of Dostoieffsky is calculated to disconcert and dismay the average reader. There is a certain limit beyond which the principle *omne ignotum pro magnifico* fails in its operation. Again, the length of Tolstoi's books is a serious obstacle in the way of popularity. Many persons, especially women, are frank enough to confess themselves bored to extinction by the excessive minuteness of his descriptions, and hopelessly confused by the peculiarities of Russian nomenclature. On the other hand it is impossible to deny that recent Russian fiction has already exerted, and is destined to exert, a powerful influence upon native workers in that field. If a *plébiscite* of literary men were to be taken as

to their favourite novelist, Tourguénief would be a most formidable candidate for first honours. Nor is this to be wondered at, if we take into account some of his claims for consideration. His writings are full, perhaps over full, of the charm of melancholy, which finds its most perfect expression in "Une Nichée de Gentilshommes," and this generation undoubtedly numbers more votaries of "Il Pensieroso" than "L'Allegro." He has moreover an unrivalled sympathy for the mysterious aspects of nature, and a corresponding mastery in dealing with the element of the supernatural. To psychologists he is specially interesting as affording the most remarkable instance of the connection between the creative and dreaming imagination, for Tourguénief was a great dreamer. Lastly, he is essentially the musician's novelist, for no man of letters has ever treated that much-abused art with more exquisite sympathy. And yet in spite of all these remarkable qualities and many others less easy to define, we find ourselves, for the present at least, wavering in our allegiance to Tourguénief, beneath the spell of his great rival and friend Tolstoi "ce prodigieux Tolstoi, qui terrasse mon imagination et enchaîne mon jugement."*

One of the most brilliant of recent recruits in the ranks of the great army of English writers of fiction, Mr. Rider Haggard, to whom in common with thousands of others we owe "the swift passage of many happy hours," has advanced an eloquent plea in a paper in the *Contemporary Review* in favour of greater liberty being accorded to English novelists in treating the broad questions of humanity. Unless they are emancipated from the trammels which a deference for the feelings of the Young Person has imposed upon them, he thinks we shall be landed in a wholesale revolt to Zolaism, which he pronounces an accursed thing. Now while we are entirely in accord with Mr. Haggard in his estimate of Zolaism, we think that the French, by the interest they have shown in Russian fiction in the form of translations, studies, &c., and in which they have been quite ten years ahead of us, have probably furnished us with the most effective antidote to the poison which has begun to filter from their fiction into our own. No writer, short of an adherent of Zola, can crave greater liberty than that enjoyed by Tolstoi in the pages of "War and Peace," and yet we believe there is nothing in that book from which a healthy-minded young person could take hurt. We confess that we could well wish that Tolstoi had not written "Anna Karénine," for he has shown in "War and Peace," and again in his "Memories," that it is possible to give as realistic a picture of manhood and womanhood as any one can wish to have, without being either disgusting or dreary.

Begun in 1851 and laid aside in 1857, these "Memories" remain a fragment. It would seem as though the writer had

* M. de Vogüé in his Preface to Tourguénief's "Œuvres Dernières."

grown a little weary of the task, and the feeling of irksomeness which he ascribes to the narrator in dealing with certain passages in his life may have faithfully reflected his own state of mind, and lends weight to the assertion which his various biographers have put forward to the effect that in these *notes intimes*, as M. de Vogüé calls them, Tolstoi has revealed the growth of his own character, and that the hero, Nicolas Irteneff, is none other than Tolstoi himself. For our own part we should prefer, if possible, to regard the autobiography as largely imaginary, holding, as we do, that the complete turning of oneself inside out, which such a process otherwise involves, has in it a certain degradation, which would greatly impair the enjoyment of perusal, while it destroys the principle of impersonality, the observance of which generally varies in a direct ratio with the artistic merit of such a work. It remains to be noticed, as we gather from M. Arvède Barine, the author of one of the two French translations of the "Memories," that when Tolstoi made up his mind to publish these fragments, he seems to have hesitated which passages to print and which to suppress. The successive editions vary considerably in their contents; paragraphs, even whole chapters, have been printed, then suppressed, then reinserted. As we have already mentioned, two separate French translations, each claiming to have been executed with the author's sanction, have recently appeared in Paris. That executed by M. Arvède Barine, which we have read, is, so far as a critic unfamiliar with Russian may be allowed to pass judgment, thoroughly fluent and readable, and on the showing of internal evidence, a faithful representation of the original.

The opening chapters of "Childhood"—the first of the three divisions of the "Memories"—introduce us to the Irteneff family when Nicolas was just ten years old, and give a wonderfully vivid set of pictures of the chief personages of that household, as well as of the surroundings in which they moved. With two exceptions—to be shortly mentioned—they cannot be pronounced to be very lovable or admirable types of humanity, but they are, at any rate, exceedingly human. There is the lonely old German tutor, sincerely attached to his young charges, sensitive on the score of his services, yet easily appeased by any show of attention; generous as a friend, and yet unable to repress a commercial instinct, which inclines us to suppose that Tolstoi has called him Mayer not by accident but of set purpose. Nicolas's father, again, is admirably drawn, and the slow but gradual process of disillusionment which takes place in the son's mind with respect to his parent is indicated with the subtlest skill. Worldly and selfish as he is, it is impossible to avoid having a sneaking liking for this middle-aged Lovelace, of chivalrous bearing and courteous manners, whose eyes filled with tears as he read aloud a pathetic passage, and whose life had been so full of *entraînements* that

he had never time to have principles, being for the rest too successful in life to see the necessity of them—a man, in fine, “who understood so perfectly how to hide from others and from himself the disagreeable side of life that it was impossible not to envy him.” *Apropos* of his mother, he writes: “When one tries to recall the features of a beloved person, so many recollections emerge at once that they obscure the vision just as tears do. These are the tears of the heart.” He can only recover a few charming details, but the *ensemble* escapes him. And yet the sketch is a touching one, and the language in which he speaks of his mother is always marked by a beautiful affection.

Of all the characters engaged, however, there is none so delightful as the old housekeeper, Nathalie Savichna, a type fortunately not common to Russia, and which will appeal with strange force to all who have known the wonderful capacity for unselfish devotion which is to be met with in a certain class of servants. Nathalie's history is curiously illustrative of the conditions of serfdom. As a girl, she had wished to marry a fellow-servant, and her master not approving, was degraded to the rank of a farm servant until she resigned her desire for matrimony. The decree of enfranchisement seemed to her, as to some of the negroes in America, as a sentence of banishment. What had she done to deserve dismissal at the hands of her beloved mistress? Accordingly we find her devoting the rest of her life to the service of Nicolas's mother, and the jealous guardianship of her interests and those of her children. What Nicolas thought of her may be gathered from the following passage:

“As far back as I can remember, I can recall the proofs of affection and the caresses of Nathalie Savichna, but it is only now that I know how to appreciate them. When I was a child I had no notion of the worth of this old woman. I did not suspect that she was worthy of adoration, or that there were few like her. Not only did she never speak, but she never even thought of herself: her whole life was nothing but love and self-denial. I was so accustomed to her disinterested affection for us that I never imagined the possibility of a different state of things, and was not in the least grateful to her. I never dreamt of asking myself whether she was happy and contented. I used often when in school to ask leave to go out, but it was merely an excuse, and I used to run off to Nathalie's room. I used to sit down and fall to musing out loud, without troubling myself about her presence. She was never idle. Sometimes she was knitting a stocking, sometimes rummaging in the chests of which her room was full, sometimes marking linen. I used to tell her that when I was a general, I should marry a wife of marvellous beauty. I should buy myself a chestnut horse and build myself a house of glass, and that I should write to Saxony to fetch the family of Karl Ivanitch [his tutor]. She used to listen to all my

nonsense, repeating from time to time: 'Yes, little father, yes.' Usually when I got up to go out, she used to open a blue chest, on the cover of which—how well I recollect it!—were gummed a coloured hussar, a little figure which came off a pot of pomade, and a drawing done by Volodia. She used to take a pastille out of this box, light it, and wave it about in the air. 'There, little father, that comes from Otchakov. When your late grandfather—God rest his soul!—went to fight the Turks, he brought it back. Only this little piece is left. That's the last of it,' she added with a sigh."

Nicolas only once had a quarrel with Nathalie. He had upset a glass of *kvass* on one of her spotless table-cloths, and with his mother's approval, Nathalie, having laid in wait for him outside the dining-room, caught hold of the culprit and rubbed his face with the soiled portion, bidding him be careful never to repeat the offence. "This behaviour seemed to me so insulting that I regularly howled with rage." Nathalie, seeing his wrath, ran off hastily, while Nicolas continued to walk up and down in the hall, "planning how to punish the wrong, which this impudent Nathalie had done me. After a few minutes, Nathalie reappeared. She came up to me timidly: 'Come, dear, don't cry. Forgive me, I was stupid; forgive me, my little pigeon. See, this is for you.' She drew from under her shawl a roll of red paper, which she offered me with a trembling hand. There were two caramels and a dried fig in it. I had not the courage to look in the face of the kind old woman. I took the paper as I turned away, and my tears flowed all the faster, but it was no longer from anger: it was from affection and shame."

There is much, as we have said above, that is strange—even disconcerting—to English readers in the manners and usages of Russian life as depicted by so faithful a chronicler as Count Tolstoi. A superstitious reverence for mad people and idiots, as though they claimed special protection, is (or was) so universal among well-born Russians, that even Nicolas's father, with all his talent for avoiding disagreeables, had to submit, though not without some grumbling, to the periodic visits of the imbecile Gricha. Beset with a childish curiosity to see the chains which it was understood Gricha always wore beneath his tattered raiment, Nicolas and Volodia, his elder brother, hide themselves in a closet adjoining the room set apart for the idiot, and instead of being amused are strangely stirred and awed by the incoherent but touching prayers offered up in tones so earnest "that one would have said he expected to receive an answer on the spot."

Shortly after this episode, Nicolas sets out with his father for Moscow, a prey to the conflicting emotions of sorrow at parting from his mother and joy at the prospect of change and travel. For Count Tolstoi is relentlessly true to nature in describing the trivial and often unworthy thoughts that intrude themselves at

critical moments, not only into the minds of children, but those of grown-up people. These "Memories" abound in illustrations of the sometimes painful fact that absolutely unalloyed emotions are of the rarest occurrence. Nicolas was very sorry to leave his mother, but the need of this journey to Moscow, in order to carry on the education of himself and his brother, was in itself a welcome proof that he was becoming big, and this was flattering to his vanity. Less creditable is the confession that he derived a certain consolation from the fact that the tears which he continued to shed after they had started were a proof of his fine feeling.

The first episode of consequence in their town life is that of their grandmother's birthday party. Nicolas, anxious to strike out a new line in the way of a gift, resolves to compose a set of verses in her honour, and the difficulties he encounters in realizing his scheme and the aggravating consciousness of the false sentiment which pervades his first literary effort, are most amusingly described. Among the most disconcerting features of these "Memories" is the entire disregard which it displays of the code of honour as usually observed by an English schoolboy. Nicolas, being at a loss for a model for his verses, has no more compunction about rummaging among his tutor's papers than he has later on about prying into his father's correspondence. He is not strictly truthful, but the *naïveté* with which he owns to his various shortcomings helps not a little to mitigate their ugliness. Furthermore, though painfully conscious of his lack of good looks—his large feet, moujik's features, and rebellious hair—or perhaps we should say precisely because he is so conscious, he stands convicted of the vice of vanity. Indeed, a French critic, in treating of this work, has gone so far as to say that the net impression derived from its perusal is that vanity is the mainspring of human character. For our own part we should find it very difficult to reduce the resultant impressions from the study of such a work down to such scanty or unsatisfactory dimensions. Along with ignoble curiosity and other base traits in the character of Nicolas, there exist so many fine instincts and exalted aspirations that the general effect upon an optimist student of human nature is rather to confirm him in his views than to shake their stability. A curious and rather pathetic episode belonging to this period of the hero's life is his unrequited friendship for Sergius Ivine, a handsome, cruel, tyrannical boy, for fear of crossing whom Nicolas was ready to stifle his better feelings. Thus, though merciful and tender-hearted as a rule, he was content to help Sergius to bully young Grapp, the son of a poor German, simply lest he should lose the former's goodwill. There is indeed something touching, spite of its evil results, in this childish hero-worship, this "disinterested and immense affection which expired without finding a vent or awakening an echo." Already

Nicolas had reached the age when children begin to ape their seniors, a practice with regard to which Count Tolstoi makes some characteristic comments :

"Strange to say, when I was a child I tried to be like grown-up people; and since I have become grown up, I have longed to be like a child. How often, in my relations with Sergius, has the fear of seeming childish made me stifle my feelings and play the hypocrite? Not only was I afraid to kiss him, though I sometimes would have given anything to do it, or to take his hand, or say how glad I was to see him, but I did not even venture to call him by his pet name *Sérioja*, and always called him Sergius, for this was the understanding between us. Every sign of sentiment seemed to us *childish*. We had not yet traversed those bitter experiences which render grown-up persons prudent and reserved in their relations, and yet we deprived ourselves of the innocent joys of sweet childish friendship simply for the singular satisfaction of imitating our elders."

The children's ball at which Nicolas loses his heart to Sonia is full of natural and amusing touches, and the picture of Sonia herself is prettily drawn, especially where it is said that her face was one on which you did not expect to see a smile, and that for that very reason the smile, when it did come, was all the more bewitching. All the incidents of this party, and notably the rapid vicissitudes of nervousness and confidence which Nicolas passed through, are delightfully told. *Apropos* of shyness, Count Tolstoi makes the following acute remark: "The sufferings of shy people are due to the fact that they are ignorant of the impression which they have produced. As soon as this impression, no matter what it may be, is clearly manifested, the suffering ceases." This is illustrated by the course of his conversation with Sonia. He was terribly embarrassed at first, and did not know what on earth to talk to her about. At last, dreading that she might take him for a fool, he resolved at all hazards to counteract such a false impression :

"*'Vous êtes une habitante de Moscou ?'* I remarked to her, in French. On receiving an affirmative answer I went on, *'Moi, je n'ai encore jamais fréquenté la capitale.'* I counted a great deal on the effect of the word *'fréquenter'*; however, I became conscious that after this brilliant start, which showed how I excelled in French, it would be impossible for me to maintain the conversation at the same pitch. It would not be our turn for some time to dance again, and the silence had recommenced. I looked at her with embarrassment, anxious to know what impression I was making, and waiting for her to come to my aid. *'Where did you get that funny glove ?'* she asked all at once, and this question gave me the utmost pleasure and relief. I explained to her that the glove belonged to Karl Ivanitch, and I dilated with a certain irony upon his appear-

ance. I described how grotesque he looked when he took off his red skull-cap; how he had tumbled off his horse one day right into a pond, &c. The quadrille went like lightning. All this was delightful, but why should I have scoffed at Karl Ivanitch? Should I have lost the good opinion of Sonia, if I had spoken of him with the affection and respect which he inspired in me?"

In sad contrast to these gaieties is the letter announcing their mother's dangerous illness and their hasty return to their country seat. The scenes in the sick room are painted with that amazing vividness which is so characteristic of Tolstoi in dealing with these subjects. It has been truly said that death has a strange fascination for Russian novelists, and though the last hours of Nicolas's mother are not described with that painful minuteness which marks similar passages in "*War and Peace*," the mystery and horror as felt by a child are brought home to the reader with singular force. One of the most striking passages in the book is that which records the strangely mixed feelings that crowded in upon Nicolas as he went to see his mother for the last time, telling how mental pictures of his mother in a variety of living phases alternated with the dreadful reality before him and were succeeded by a sort of numb torpor, during which latter period alone his grief was absolutely unalloyed. At every other moment it was mingled with and debased by other feelings. The attitude of the strangers and bystanders was intolerable to him. Their stock phrases of officious condolence only served to add to his irritation, and he compares the zeal they showed to be the first to allude to him and his brother and sister as orphans to that evinced by guests in saluting a bride by her married name. On the other hand the unaffected homely grief of Nathalie had the effect of making him feel ashamed of himself. This powerful but painful chapter closes with one rather gruesome touch. In accordance with the custom observed on such occasions all the peasants came forward to kiss the uncovered face of the dead. Almost the last of this number was a woman who had in her arms a little child of about five years old. As she advanced Nicolas heard an appalling scream, and looking up saw the peasant woman trying to calm the little child, who was struggling, throwing herself back and shrieking as she looked on the corpse with dilated eyes. "The notion that this face, so fair and lovable only a few days before, the face of her whom I loved best in the world, could inspire horror, disclosed to me, so to speak, the cruel truth, and filled my soul with despair."

Nicolas found the best solace for his sorrow in the talks he used to have with Nathalie. "Ah! little father," said she [in answer to his question whether she expected his mother's death], casting on me a look of singular melancholy and affection, "one could not possibly have expected it, and I cannot yet think about it. I am an old woman; my old bones ought long since to have been

laid to rest, and yet I outlive them all—the old master your grandfather, of eternal memory, the prince Nicolas Mikhailovitch, his two brothers, his sister Annouchka, I have seen them all go down to the grave, and they were all younger than I, little father, and now it is my fate to outlive even *her*—for my sins, no doubt. May His blessed will be done! He has taken her because she deserved it; even above God has need of the good." This whole scene, illustrating at every turn the guileless nature of this good old woman, her quaint superstition and sure hope of speedily rejoining her beloved mistress, is exceedingly affecting.

Soon after this the family leave again for Moscow, and Nathalie's hope of reunion is quickly realized. The story of her end is very simply told, but the narrative is so moving that it would involve a severe exercise of self-control to read it aloud. There is a strain of infinitely tender regret in these pages which invests the humble details of Nathalie's lonely but contented death-bed with a dignity and beauty of the rarest order. "She had no fear of death, but welcomed it as a blessing. That is a remark which is often made, but how rarely is it true! Nathalie Savichna could not fear death, for she died in unshaken faith, and she had accomplished the law of the Gospel; her whole life had been nothing but pure and disinterested love and self-sacrifice. What! because her religion might have been of a higher order, because her life might have had a more exalted aim, is this rare spirit on that account less worthy of affection and admiration? She achieved the noblest and best work in this world—she died without fear or regret."

"Boyhood," the second division of this work, opens with the description of another journey to Moscow, during the course of which Nicolas's point of view suddenly and seriously altered. The means by which this change was effected was a conversation of a sufficiently ordinary character with one of the party. But none the less completely on that account was the result achieved. Everything seemed to present to him a new and hitherto unfamiliar side. He realized for the first time what in a sense he had known before, but not fully—that there were other beings on the earth besides his family, and that all interests did not centre in *them*. This expansion continued on his arrival in Moscow, where the fear he had hitherto felt of his grandmother gave way to compassion and tenderness, while on the other hand his eyes were daily opened to the defects of his father's character. About this time Nicolas lost his heart again, on this occasion to one of their servants, and in connection with this short-lived affection he relates rather a grotesque episode. While hiding beneath the stairs he surprises his brother Volodia, a boy of sixteen, kissing this pretty chambermaid, who struggles and protests that his brother Nicolas would never have behaved like that, little thinking that Nicolas was within earshot, and would have given

anything to have been in Volodia's shoes. The account of their studies under the new tutor—the old German had been dismissed on the ground of his inability to keep them in proper order—is marked by some curious and interesting episodes. Nicolas's idleness reaches a crisis on his sister's birthday. At his history lesson, which was always a penance to him, he breaks down hopelessly, and is given the worst mark, nor has he the courage to contradict Volodia when the latter informs their tutor that their history master had given Nicolas a four, the best mark but one. To make matters worse he is led by his curiosity, on being sent on an errand to his father's room, to pry into the latter's correspondence, with the result that the domestic idol sinks still further in his esteem. On trying to relock the desk the key snaps off and he is foredoomed to detection. He behaves naughtily at their games, but is punished by Sonia's paying no regard to him, and forthwith becomes a misogynist for the nonce, ready to set the house on fire or work some serious mischief out of the sheer childish desire to do something. On this temporary eclipse of the reasoning faculty, when the material instincts become the sole springs of action, Count Tolstoi comments with extraordinary acuteness of perception. It was in such a mood that Nicolas met and insulted his tutor when the latter came to remove him. The chapter which portrays his feelings when locked up in the dark, and momentarily expecting to be flogged, is wonderfully vivid and powerful. Convinced that every one hated him, Nicolas is driven there and then to invent, and finally well-nigh comes to believe in, an absurd cause for this supposed hatred—he was an orphan, a foundling. Then his fancy took wings; he saw himself demanding explanations from his father, acting and speaking in a vein of sentimental self-sacrifice—How many of us, like Daudet's *M. Joyeuse*, have been and are slaves to these fancies!—or he was free, a soldier, a victorious general to whom the Czar offered what he would, and he saw and heard himself demanding leave to annihilate his tutor. But at that moment the whole dream-fabric toppled down at the thought of his tutor entering in the flesh with his birch rod; he was no longer the hero and saviour of his country, but, bathed in tears, plunged in humiliation, the most miserable creature alive.

Following hard on this episode comes a period in which Nicolas lived in a state of moral isolation, sunk in himself and harassing his mind with the consideration of the deepest and most inscrutable problems. His crude reasonings sometimes led him to see happiness in indifference to external events, and for the time he would play the stoic. Anon since death was always nigh, he saw true wisdom in enjoying the pleasure of the moment, and so, "under the influence of this idea, for three whole days I neglected my lessons, and spent my time stretched on my bed amusing myself with reading a novel or eating gingerbread."

The result of all this intellectual fatigue, he notes, was "a mental agility, which weakened the force of my will, and a habit of incessant moral analysis which robbed my sensations of all freshness, and my judgment of all precision." And yet in spite of all his dreams of intellectual greatness, and the self-satisfaction caused by these discoveries, which seemed to lift him above the level of his fellows, he was not a whit less frightened, shy, or ashamed of himself in the company of these same people. This part of his life he declares to be peculiarly painful and irksome to retrace, though its dreariness was occasionally illumined by flashes of sincere and ardent emotion. Volodia was now entering upon University life, and his cleverness, his good looks, his independence and grown-up ways, inspired Nicolas with a lively sense of admiration. His sister, Lioubotchka, and her friend Catherine are described and contrasted in a very interesting chapter, which shows how the good looks, the *sensiblerie*, and gush of the latter proved more taking to his unformed judgment than Lioubotchka's unattractive exterior and blunt sincerity. Digressing to give some account of his moral and intellectual progress, he confesses that the sole reason why he took up mathematics was that the terms *sine*, *tangent*, *differential*, *integral*, pleased him immensely. His lack of good looks was still a source of discontent, partially mitigated, however, when his father declared him to be *intelligently plain*. His distaste for his tutor, again, almost changed to affection when the latter spoke highly of his abilities. The opportune marriage of the pretty housemaid entirely chilled his affection in that quarter, and, finally, he notices that he was beginning to correct his boyish faults, except the worst and most troublesome of all—the passion for reasoning. The last two chapters of "Boyhood" give some account of his brother's friends, Doubkof and Nékhlioudof. The former was a man of the world, and agreeable, as people often are, by reason of his limited intelligence. "Only being able to see one side of a question, they are always *entraînés*. Their opinions are exclusive and incorrect, but always sincere and attractive." Nékhlioudof, on the other hand, was serious and enthusiastic, and won Nicolas's heart by the frankness of his praise. They take to long *tête-à-tête* discussions, "full of intelligent absurdities," and make a mutual resolve to have no secrets from each other, at the same time that they are pledged never to discuss each other before strangers. Nicolas assimilates his friend's manner of looking at things, at the bottom of which was an enthusiastic worship of ideal virtue, associated with the conviction that man was destined to continuous progress. Still, he owns, at the outset of the third section of the "Memories," that his friend's optimistic views "had only seduced his intellect; his mode of life did not otherwise alter until his virtuous thoughts suddenly imposed themselves upon him with the force of a moral resolution." Nominally

occupied with his preparations for entering the University, Nicolas is obliged to own that he spent a great deal of time in other pursuits—in day dreams, in gymnastic exercises "in order to become the strongest man in the world," and in aimless loungings and *séances* before his looking-glass, which he never quitted without a sense of profound discouragement, even of disgust. In agreeable contrast with the foregoing passage is the succeeding chapter, which gives a wonderfully vivid and beautiful picture of the dawning of a Russian spring, and in regard to which Tolstoi remarks: "I do not know why it is, but I think that the impression produced by this birth of spring is more lively and profound in a great town—one sees less, but one divines more." The need of an immediate moral regeneration is suddenly brought home to him by this sensation of dawning life all around. He makes all sorts of good resolutions with regard to his devotions, to almsgiving and orderliness, and is forthwith led into his favourite practice of day-dreaming, a not impossible but seraphic *she* forming the background. Abruptly dismissing this amorous vision, Nicolas declares to himself that, on the contrary, he will avoid all disturbing contact with womenkind. "I will take a great deal of exercise, and practise gymnastics every day. At twenty-five I shall be stronger than Rappo. The first day I shall hold out a weight of fifteen pounds at arm's length for five minutes, the next day a weight of sixteen pounds, the next of seventeen pounds, and so on, until I am able to hold sixty pounds in each hand. I shall then be stronger than all our servants. When any one ventures to insult or speak disrespectfully of *her* I shall just take him by the waistband—so—I shall lift him up with one hand, and I shall hold him in the air two or three feet off the ground, just to show my strength, without doing him any harm. . . . Let not my readers," he adds, "reproach me with these youthful day-dreams under the pretext that they were as childish as when I was quite small. I am convinced that if I am destined to live to be very old, even at seventy years of age, I shall indulge in dreams as infantile and fantastic as these."

At the bottom of all these dreams he notices four main sentiments—love for *her*, the woman of his imagination; passionate longing to be loved; a vague expectation of some ineffable happiness; and lastly, a feeling of horror and despair about himself, so intimately mingled with a passionate desire for improvement as not to be altogether painful. It seemed to be so easy to break with the past, that the past did not trouble him. An interesting chapter is that in which Nicolas describes the day of confession in the family, and in the different ways in which the various members of it bore themselves before and after the confessional. To him it was a shock that his surroundings did not undergo the same transfiguration that he himself seemed to experience. With

his entrance examination imminent, he describes the frequent inability he felt to settle down to work, due to the sentiment of liberty and his boyish expectation that some extraordinary event was about to happen. The scent of spring or the rustling of a skirt was quite enough to unhinge his application and destroy a morning's work. The picture of his formal *entrée* on grown-up life is delightfully entertaining. Immensely proud of his students' uniform, and quite unable to keep up an air of indifference before the servants, Nicolas felt that at everything that was said to him an inane smirk of satisfaction spread on his face, and could not help remarking that this same smirk communicated itself to all who spoke to him. The visits, divided by his father into indispensable and optional, which Nicolas found himself called upon to pay in connection with his assumption of man's estate, were, one and all, productive of great discomfort. In the presence of his superiors he was always apprehensive of rebuffs, and in consequence always prepared to assert his indifference. Again, when he went to call on the Valakhines, as soon as he decided that he was still in love with Sonia, his ease vanished, and on the appearance of her mother he was seized with such an excess of shyness as to be glued to his chair, until the arrival of a stranger caused a diversion and enabled him to get up and take his leave. The greatest trial of all awaited him at the Ivines, when he was met with frigid politeness by the son, and absolute indifference by the father. Lastly his visit to the old prince Ivan Ivanovitch was spoilt by a needless pre-occupation lest he should appear in the false position of a fortune hunter. "It was only long afterwards that I learnt by the experience of life how wrong it is to think, and even more so to say, a quantity of things which appear to us to be very noble, but which ought to remain buried for ever in the depths of the human heart. I learned, also, that fine words are rarely attended by fine deeds. I am convinced that the mere fact of having *expressed* a good intention renders its realization difficult, generally impossible." The visit to the Nékhloudof household, though not so attractive as other parts of the book, is noticeable for the interesting disquisition on the three sorts of love which is suggested by the character of Sophie Ivanovna, one of those old maids intended for domestic life, but who, having been denied that happiness, make it their business to lavish on a chosen few the stores of love amassed during all the years in which they looked forward to having a husband and children. Tolstoi dismisses for the time being the love felt by a young man for a young girl, or *vice versa*—attachments which he says always fill him with dismay—and proceeds to divide love—by which he means love felt by a human creature for other human creatures—into three kinds: elegant love, devoted love, and active love. The first he defines as consisting in being enamoured of the beauty of

the sentiment which one experiences and in a complacent satisfaction in the expression of it. "In my country," he goes on, "people of a certain class who love in this elegant fashion are not content to speak of it to everybody, they always speak of it *in French*. It is an absurd and grotesque thing to say, but I am convinced that there have been and are—in a certain circle—many persons, especially women, in whom the love they feel for friends, husband, and children would cease the moment it was forbidden to be expressed in French." Devoted love consists, on the other hand, in loving the operation of the sacrifice one makes in behalf of the beloved object without troubling oneself in the least to ascertain whether the beloved object will find him or herself the better or worse for it. This sort of love is analyzed and illustrated with astonishing penetration; the truth with which the author points out the jealousy and the harassing nature of this love being at times almost painful. Thirdly, and finally, active love consists in a vehement desire to satisfy all the needs, wants, caprices, reasonable and unreasonable, of the beloved one. Even the faults of the beloved are dear to those possessed by this love, inasmuch as they furnish further needs to be satisfied. "Such persons," he adds, "rarely express their love in words, and if they do so it is awkwardly and shyly expressed, for they are always afraid of not loving enough; and such was the love that could be read in the eyes, the movements, and the words of Sophie Ivanovna." Another acute observation is made in connection with the inner life of the Nékhloudof family. "How often it happens that one knows a family for years without being allowed, by the deceptive veil of *les bienséances*, to perceive the true relation of the members of this family one with the other. The thicker the veil," he continues, "the uglier are the true relations."

The succeeding chapter relates in singularly effective fashion the impressions caused by the sight, after a long interval, of the familiar surroundings of childhood, and the caressing effect of old associations. By this time the relations between Volodia and Nicolas on the one hand, and their sister and her companion on the other, had altered and become rather strained, chiefly owing to Volodia's theories as to the intellectual inferiority of women-kind. He never treated them seriously, answering their questions with some cant phrase or nonsensical remark. This contempt Tolstoi explains with his usual acumen as follows: "The prosaic recollections of childhood were too strong, or else it was due to the kind of aversion which very young people feel towards every one belonging to their own household, or to that weakness which impels all of us when we meet goodness and beauty at the outset of our career to pass on, saying, 'Bah, I shall find plenty of that in the course of life.'" Nicolas copied Volodia's sentiments in this regard; and in connection with this there occurs another remarkable passage on that faculty of mutual understanding developed

more or less in every circle or family. Tolstoi defines it, in its essence, as the habit of applying to surrounding objects the same conventional measure and of viewing them from the same conventional standpoint. "Two persons of the same set or of the same family endowed with the faculty in question will never overstep certain bounds in the expression of sentiment, because they each of them recognize cant in such excess. They perceive, likewise, the point at which praise becomes irony, and warmth hypocrisy, whilst others outside the circle may judge quite differently." From this he goes on to describe his occupations and ambitions, his desire—aroused by the visit of a stranger—to play the piano, his notion of music being simply "a means of fascinating girls by the exhibition of sentiment," and his execrable choice of pieces; his taste in fiction, and his capacity for discovering in himself—just like a hypochondriac—all the passions attributed by novelists to their most preposterous creations.

Nicolas's ideal hero at this period was a man of violent passions and extraordinarily thick eyebrows, but a more practical and attainable standard was that summed up in the magic words "*comme il faut*," the ambition to become which he declares to have been one of the most false and pernicious of all those developed in him by education and society. After summarizing the main and the minor essentials of the man who was "*comme il faut*," he adds that the worst of it all was not the waste of time, nor the contempt it inspired in him for his fellows, but the conviction which he held for the time being, that in being "*comme il faut*" a man had done his duty in the world and fulfilled his destiny. "The '*comme-il-faut*' man," he adds, "never wakes up to the necessity of doing any work in the world."

The "Memories" are full of abrupt transitions and contrasts, and the chapter which succeeds this shrewd and entertaining disquisition is the most beautiful and poetical in the book. It merely relates the way in which he used to spend a summer's day in the country; describing his early bathe in the stream, followed by a ramble through the fields with his head full of wild visions of happiness and love; his visits to the kitchen garden, where he would sit and eat fruit by the hour, amid all the scents and sounds of the summer; his afternoon rides, the music in the evening, his leisurely preparations for going to bed, the gradual dying away of all the stir and life in the house, winding up with a wonderful picture of the magical beauty that everything assumed in the silent moonlight, when the most ordinary sounds are invested with a mystical charm, until his romantic and sensuous imaginings gave way before a sense of union with nature in its surpassing beauty. We could almost have wished that the volume had ended here, for anything that came after this chapter was bound to be somewhat of an anti-climax. As it is, half-a-dozen short chapters remain, telling of the second marriage of

Nicolas's father, and the gradual cooling of his friendship with Nékhloudof—the result of their dangerous vow to tell everything to each other.

Such then in imperfect outline is the earliest of Tolstoi's masterpieces. We have attempted no critical estimate of it, confining ourselves rather to a description, illustrated here and there by quotation of its contents. For in the presence of and while under the influence of genius of such a high order as is here displayed, it is impossible to take notice of the flaws and blemishes by which the work is occasionally disfigured. It is like listening to Rubinstein playing. Wrong notes are struck now and then, exaggerations occur here and violences there. But in the face of so much force and tenderness, and above all of that magical power of laying hold of the heart of his audience, the critical faculty is temporarily suspended. Although this paper has run to an undue length, it has not exhausted a tithe of the beauties of Count Tolstoi's pages. If it has succeeded in interesting those who have followed us thus far, we can promise them a rich harvest of enjoyment on turning to the original from which this sketch is taken.

THE HIRED BABY:

A ROMANCE OF THE LONDON STREETS.

By MARIE CORELLI,

AUTHOR OF "VENDETTA," "THELMA," ETC.

A DARK, desolate December night—a night that clung to the metropolis like a wet black shroud—a night in which the heavy low-hanging vapours melted every now and then into a slow reluctant rain, cold as icicle drops in a rock-cavern. People passed and repassed in the streets like ghosts in a bad dream; the twinkling gaslight showed them at one moment rising out of the fog and then disappearing from view as though suddenly engulfed in a vaporous ebon sea. With muffled angry shrieks, the metropolitan trains deposited their shoals of shivering, coughing travellers at the several stations, where sleepy officials, rendered vicious by the weather, snatched the tickets from their hands with offensive haste and roughness. Omnibus conductors grew ill-tempered and abusive without any seemingly adequate reason; shopkeepers became flippant, disobliging and careless of custom; cabmen shouted derisive or denunciatory language after their rapidly retreating fares; in short everybody was in a discontented, almost spiteful humour, with the exception of those few aggressively cheerful persons who are in the habit of always making the best of everything, even bad weather. Down the long wide vista of the Cromwell Road, Kensington, the fog had it all its own way; it swept on steadily, like thick smoke from a huge fire, choking the throats and blinding the eyes of foot-passengers, stealing through the crannies of the houses, and chilling the blood of even those luxurious individuals who, seated in elegant drawing-rooms before blazing fires, easily forgot that there were such bitter things as cold and poverty in that outside world against which they had barred their doors. At one house in particular—a house with gaudy glass doors and somewhat soiled yellow silk curtains at the windows—a house that plainly said of itself—"Done up for show!" to all who cared to examine its exterior—there stood a closed brougham drawn by a prancing pair of fat horses. A coachman of distinguished appearance sat on the box: a footman of irreproachable figure stood waiting on the pavement, his yellow-gloved hand

resting elegantly on the polished silver knob of the carriage-door. Both these gentlemen were resolute and inflexible of face; they looked as if they had determined on some great deed that should move the world to wild applause,—but, truth to tell, they had only just finished a highly satisfactory “meat-tea,” and before this grave silence had fallen upon them they had been discussing the advisability of broiled steak and onions for supper. The coachman had inclined to plain mutton-chops as being easier of digestion; the footman had earnestly asseverated his belief in the superior succulence and sweetness of the steak and onions, and in the end he had gained his point. This weighty question being settled, they had gradually grown reflective on the past, present, and future joys of eating at some one else’s expense, and in this bland and pleasing state of meditation they were still absorbed. The horses were impatient and pawed the muddy ground with many a toss of their long manes and tails, the steam from their glossy coats mingling with the ever-thickening density of the fog. On the white stone steps of the residence before which they waited, was an almost invisible bundle, apparently shapeless and immovable. Neither of the two gorgeous personages in livery observed it; it was too far back in a dim corner, too unobtrusive for the casual regard of their lofty eyes. Suddenly the glass doors before-mentioned were thrown apart with a clattering noise, a warmth and radiance from the entrance-hall thus displayed streamed into the foggy street, and at the same instant the footman, still with grave and imperturbable countenance, opened the brougham. An elderly lady, richly dressed, with diamonds sparkling in her grey hair, came rustling down the steps, bringing with her faint odours of patchouli and violet powder. She was followed by a girl of doll-like prettiness with a snub nose and petulant little mouth, who held up her satin and lace skirts with a sort of fastidious disdain as though she scorned to set foot on earth that was not carpeted with the best velvet pile. As they approached their carriage, the inert dark bundle crouched in the corner started into life,—a woman with wild hair and wilder eyes,—whose pale lips quivered with suppressed weeping as her piteous voice broke into sudden clamour:

“Oh lady!” she cried, “for the love of God a trifle! Oh lady, lady!”

But the “lady” with a contemptuous sniff and a shake of her scented garments passed her before she could continue her appeal, and she turned with a sort of faint hope to the softer face of the girl.

“Oh, my dear, *do* have pity! Just the smallest little thing, and God will bless you! You are rich and happy—and I am starving! Only a penny! For the baby—the poor little baby!” and she made as though she would open her tattered shawl and reveal some treasure hidden therein, but shrank back repelled

by the cold merciless gaze that fell upon her from those eyes in which youth dwelt without tenderness.

"You have no business on our door-step," said the girl harshly. "Go away directly; or I shall tell my servant to call a policeman."

Then as she entered the brougham after her mother, she addressed the respectable footman angrily, giving him the benefit of a strong nasal intonation.

"Howard, why do you let such dirty beggars come near the carriage? What are you paid for I should like to know? It is perfectly disgraceful to the house!"

"Very sorry, miss!" said the footman gravely; "I didn't see the—the person before." Then shutting the brougham door, he turned with a dignified air to the unfortunate creature who still lingered near, and with a sweeping gesture of his gold-embroidered coat-sleeve, said majestically:

"Do you 'ear? Be hoff!"

Then having thus performed his duty, he mounted the box beside his friend the coachman, and the equipage rattled quickly away, its gleaming lights soon lost in the smoke-laden vapours that drooped downwards like funeral hangings from the invisible sky to the scarcely visible ground. Left to herself, the woman who had vainly sought charity from those in whom no charity existed, looked up despairingly as one distraught, and seemed as though she would have given vent to some fierce exclamation, when a feeble wail came pitifully forth from the sheltering folds of her shawl. She restrained herself instantly and walked on at a rapid pace, scarcely heeding whither she went, till she reached the Catholic church known as the "Oratory." Its unfinished *façade* loomed darkly out of the fog; there was nothing picturesque or inviting about it, yet there were people passing softly in and out, and through the swinging to and fro of the red baize-covered doors there came a comforting warm glimmer of light. The woman paused, hesitated,—and then having apparently made up her mind, ascended the broad steps, looked in and finally entered. The place was strange to her,—she knew nothing of its religious meaning, and its cold uncompleted appearance oppressed her. There were only some half-dozen persons scattered about like black specks in its vast white interior, and the fog hung heavily in the vaulted dome and dark little chapels. One corner alone blazed with brilliancy and colour;—this was the Altar of the Virgin. Towards it the tired vagrant made her way, and on reaching it sank on the nearest chair as though exhausted. She did not raise her eyes to the marble splendours of the shrine—one of the masterpieces of old Italian art; she had been merely attracted to the spot by the glitter of the lamps and candles, and took no thought as to the reason of their being lit, though she was sensible of a certain comfort in the soft lustre shed around her. she seemed still young; her face, rendered haggard by long and

bitter privation, showed traces of past beauty, and her eyes, full of feverish trouble, were large, dark and still lustrous. Her mouth alone—that sensitive betrayer of the life's good and bad actions—revealed that all had not been well with her; its lines were hard and vicious, and the resentful curve of the upper lip spoke of foolish pride not unmingled with reckless sensuality. She sat for a minute or two motionless,—then with exceeding care and tenderness she began to unfold her thin torn shawl by gentle degrees, looking down with anxious solicitude at the object concealed within it. Only a baby,—and withal a baby so tiny and white and frail that it seemed as though it must melt like a snow-flake beneath the lightest touch. As its wrappings were loosened, it opened a pair of large, solemn blue eyes and gazed at the woman's face with a strange pitiful wistfulness. It lay quiet, without moan,—a pinched pale miniature of suffering humanity,—an infant with sorrow's mark painfully impressed upon its drawn small features. Presently it stretched forth a puny hand and feebly caressed its protectress, and this too with the faintest glimmer of a smile. The woman responded to its affection with a sort of rapture; she caught it fondly to her breast and covered it with kisses, rocking it to and fro with broken words of motherly endearment. "My little darling!" she whispered softly. "My little pet! Yes, yes I know! So tired, so cold and hungry! Never mind, baby, never mind! we will rest here a little, then we will sing a song presently and get some money to take us home. Sleep a while longer, dearie! There! now we are warm and cosy again."

So saying she re-arranged her shawl in closer and tighter folds so as to protect the child more thoroughly. While she was engaged in this operation, a lady in deep mourning passed close by her, and advancing to the very steps of the altar, knelt down, hiding her face with her clasped hands. The tired wayfarer's attention was attracted by this; she gazed with a sort of dull wonder at the kneeling figure robed in rich rustling silk and crape, and gradually her eyes wandered upwards, upwards, till they rested on the gravely sweet and serenely smiling marble image of the Virgin and Child. She looked and looked again—surprised—incredulous; then suddenly rose to her feet and made her way to the altar railing. There she paused, staring vaguely at a basket of flowers, white and odorous, that had been left there by some reverent worshipper. She glanced doubtfully at the swinging silver lamps, the twinkling candles; she was conscious too of a subtle strange fragrance in the air as though a basketful of spring violets and daffodils had just been carried by; then, as her wandering gaze came back to the solitary woman in black who still knelt motionless near her, a sort of choking sensation came into her throat and a stinging moisture struggled in her eyes. She strove to turn this hysterical sensation to a low laugh of

disdain, "Lord, Lord!" she muttered beneath her breath, "what sort of place is this, where they pray to a woman and a baby?"

At that moment the lady in black rose; she was young, with a proud, fair but weary face. Her eyes lighted on her soiled and poverty-stricken sister, and she paused with a pitying look. The street wanderer made use of the opportunity thus offered, and in an urgent whisper implored charity. The lady drew out her purse, then hesitated, looking wistfully at the bundle in the shawl.

"You have a little child there?" she asked in gentle accents. "May I see it?"

"Yes, lady;" and the wrapper was turned down sufficiently to disclose the tiny white face, now more infinitely touching than ever in the pathos of sleep.

"I lost my little one a week ago," said the lady simply, as she looked at it. "He was all I had." Her voice trembled, she opened her purse and placed a half-crown in the hand of the astonished suppliant. "You are happier than I am; perhaps you will pray for me! I am very lonely!"

Then dropping her long crape veil so that it completely hid her features, she bent her head and moved softly away. The woman watched her till her graceful figure was completely lost in the gloom of the great church, and then turned again vaguely to the altar.

"Pray for her!" she thought. "I! As if I could pray!" And she smiled bitterly. Again she looked at the statue in the shrine; it had no meaning at all for her. She had never heard of Christianity save through the medium of a tract, whose consoling title had been "Stop! You are going to Hell!" Religion of every sort was mocked at by those among whom her lot was cast, the name of Christ was only used as a convenience to swear by, and therefore this mysteriously smiling, gently inviting marble figure was incomprehensible to her mind.

"As if I could pray!" she repeated with a sort of derision. Then she looked at the broad silver coin in her hand and the sleeping baby in her arms. With a sudden impulse she dropped on her knees.

"Whoever you are," she muttered, addressing the statue above her, "it seems you've got a child of your own; perhaps you'll help me to take care of this one. It isn't mine; I wish it was! Anyway I love it more than its own mother does. I daresay you won't listen to the likes of me, but if there was God anywhere about I'd ask Him to bless that good soul that's lost her baby. I bless her with all my heart, but my blessing ain't good for much. Ah!" and she surveyed anew the Virgin's serene white countenance, "you look just as if you understood me, but I don't believe you do! Never mind, I've said all I wanted to say this time."

Her strange petition or rather discourse concluded, she rose and walked away. The great doors of the church swung heavily behind her as she stepped out and stood once more in the muddy street. It was raining steadily—a fine, cold, penetrating rain. But the coin she held was a talisman against outer discomforts, and she continued to walk on till she came to a clean-looking dairy, where for a couple of pence she was able to replenish the infant's long ago emptied feeding-bottle; but she purchased nothing for herself. She had starved all day and was now too faint to eat. Soon she entered an omnibus and was driven to Charing Cross, and alighting at the great station, brilliant with its electric light, she paced up and down outside it, accosting several of the passers-by and imploring their pity. One man gave her a penny; another, young and handsome, with a flushed intemperate face and a look of his fast-fading boyhood still about him, put his hand in his pocket and drew out all the loose coppers it contained, amounting to three pennies and an odd farthing, and dropping them into her outstretched palm, said half gaily, half boldly:

"You ought to do better than that with those big eyes of yours!" She drew back and shuddered; he broke into a coarse laugh and went his way. Standing where he had left her, she seemed for a time lost in wretched reflections, the fretful wailing cry of the child she carried roused her and hushing it softly, she murmured: "Yes, yes, darling, it is too wet and cold for you; we had better go." And acting suddenly on her resolve, she hailed another omnibus, this time bound for Tottenham Court Road, and was, after some dreary jolting, set down at her final destination—a dirty alley in the worst part of Seven Dials. Entering it, she was hailed with a shout of derisive laughter from some rough-looking men and woman who were standing grouped round a low gin-shop at the corner.

"Here's Liz!" cried one. "Here's Liz and the bloomin' kid!"

"Now, old gel, fork out! How much 'ave yer got, Liz? Treat us to a drop all round!"

Liz walked past them steadily; the conspicuous curve of her upper lip came into full play and her eyes flashed disdainfully, but she said nothing. Her silence exasperated a tangle-haired, cat-faced girl of some seventeen years, who, more than half drunk, sat on the ground clasping her knees with both arms and rocking herself lazily to and fro. "Mother Mawks!" cried she, "Mother Mawks! You're wanted! Here's Liz come back with you're babby!"

As if her words had been a powerful incantation to summon forth an evil spirit, a door in one of the miserable houses was thrown open and a stout woman, nearly naked to the waist, with a swollen, blotched and most hideous countenance, rushed out furiously, and darting at Liz, shook her violently by the arm.

"Where's my shullin'?" she yelled, "where's my gin? Out with it! Out with my shullin' and fourpence! None of your sneak-in ways with me; a bargain's a bargain all the world over! You're makin' a fortin' with my babby—yer know y'are; pays yer a deal better than yer old trade! Don't say it don't—yer knows it do. Yer'll not find such a sickly kid anywheres, an' it's the sickly kids wot pays an' moves the 'arts of the *kyind* ladies and *good* gentlemen,"—this with an imitative whine that excited the laughter and applause of her hearers. "You've got it cheap, I kin tell yer, an' if yer don't pay up reg'lar, there's others that'll take the chance, and thankful too!"

She stopped for lack of breath and Liz spoke quietly:

"It's all right, Mother Mawks," she said with an attempt at a smile; "here's your shilling, here's the four pennies for the gin. I don't owe you anything for the child now." She stopped and hesitated, looking down tenderly at the frail creature in her arms, then added almost pleadingly, "It's asleep now. May I take it with me to-night?"

Mother Mawks, who had been testing the coins Liz had given her by biting them ferociously with her large yellow teeth, broke into a loud laugh.

"Take it with yer! I like that! Wot imperence! Take it with yer!" Then with her huge red arms akimbo, she added with a grin, "Tell yer wot, if yer likes to pay me 'arf-a-crown, yer can 'ave it to cuddle an' welcome!"

Another shout of approving merriment burst from the drink-soddened spectators of the little scene, and the girl crouched on the ground removed her encircling hands from her knees to clap them loudly, as she exclaimed:

"Well done, Mother Mawks! One doesn't let out kids at night for nothing! 'Tought to be more expensive than day-time!"

The face of Liz had grown white and rigid.

"You know I can't give you that money," she said slowly. "I have not tasted bit or drop all day. I must live, though it doesn't seem worth while. The child," and her voice softened involuntarily, "is fast asleep; it's a pity to wake it, that's all. It will cry and fret all night, and—and I would make it warm and comfortable if you'd let me." She raised her eyes hopefully and anxiously, "Will you?"

Mother Mawks was evidently a lady of an excitable disposition. The simple request seemed to drive her nearly frantic. She raised her voice to an absolute scream, thrusting her dirty hands through her still dirtier hair as the proper accompanying gesture to her vituperative oratory.

"Will I! Will I!" she screeched. "Will I let out my hown babby for the night for nothing? Will I? No, I won't! I'll see yer blowed into the middle of next week fust! Lor' a'mussey! 'ow 'igh an' mighty we are gittin', to be sure! The babby'll be

quiet with you, Miss Liz; will it hindeed! An' it will cry an' fret with its hown mother; will it hindeed!" And at every sentence she approached Liz more nearly, increasing in fury as she advanced. "Yer low hussey! D'ye think I'd let yer 'ave my babby for a hour unless yer paid for't? As it is yer pays far too little. I'm a honest woman as works for my livin' 'an wot drinks reasonable, better than you by a long sight, with your stuck-up airs! A pretty drab *you* are! Gi' me the babby; ye an't no business to keep it a minit longer;" and she made a grab at Liz's sheltering shawl.

"Oh, don't hurt it!" pleaded Liz tremblingly. "Such a little thing; don't hurt it!"

Mother Mawks stared so wildly that her blood-shot eyes seemed protruding from her head.

"'Urt it! Hain't I a right to do wot I likes with my hown babby! 'Urt it! Well I never! Look 'ere!" and she turned round on the assembled neighbours. "Haint she a reglar one! She don't care for the law, not she! She's keepin' back a child from its hown mother!" And with that she made a fierce attack on the shawl and succeeded in dragging the infant from Liz's reluctant arms. Wakened thus roughly from its slumbers, the poor mite set up a feeble wailing; its mother, enraged at the sound, shook it violently till it gasped for breath.

"Drat the little beast!" she cried. "Why don't it choke an' 'ave done with it!"

And without heeding the terrified remonstrances of Liz she flung the child roughly, as though it were a ball, through the open door of her lodging, where it fell on a heap of dirty clothes, and lay motionless; its wailing had ceased.

"Oh, baby, baby!" exclaimed Liz in accents of poignant distress. "Oh! you have killed it I am sure! Oh, you are cruel, cruel! Oh, baby, baby!"

And she broke into a tempestuous passion of sobs and tears. The bystanders looked on in unmoved silence. Mother Mawks gathered her torn garments round her with a gesture of defiance, and sniffed the air as though she said, "Any one who wants to meddle with me will get the worst of it." There was a brief pause; suddenly a man staggered out of the gin-shop, smearing the back of his hand across his mouth as he came,—a massively-built, ill-favoured brute with a shock of uncombed red hair and small ferret-like eyes. He stared stupidly at the weeping Liz, then at Mother Mawks, finally from one to the other of the loafers who stood by. "Wot's the row?" he demanded thickly, "Wot's up? 'Ave it out fair! Joe Mawks'll stand by an' see fair game. Fire away, my hearties! fire, fire away!" And with a chuckling idiot laugh he dived into the pocket of his torn corduroy trousers and produced a pipe. Filling this leisurely from a greasy pouch, with such unsteady fingers that the tobacco dropped all over him, he lit it, repeating

with increased thickness of utterance "Wot's the row? 'Ave it out fair!"

"It's about your babby, Joe!" cried the girl before-mentioned, jumping up from her seat on the ground with such force that her hair came tumbling all about her in a dark dank mist through which her thin eager face spitefully peered, "Liz has gone crazy! She wants your babby to cuddle!" And she screamed with sudden laughter, "Eh, eh! fancy! Wants a babby to cuddle!"

The stupefied Joe blinked drowsily and sucked the stem of his pipe with apparent relish. Then as if he had been engaged in deep meditation on the subject, he removed his smoky consoler from his mouth and said, "W'y not? Wants a babby to cuddle? All right! Let 'er 'ave it—w'y not?"

At these words Liz looked up hopefully through her tears, but Mother Mawks darted forward in raving indignation.

"Yer great drunken fool!" she yelled to her besotted spouse, "aren't yer ashamed of yerself? Wot! Let out yer babby a whole night for nuthin'? It's lucky I've got my wits about me; an' I say Liz *shan't* 'ave it! There now!"

The man looked at her and a dogged resolution darkened his repulsive countenance. He raised his big fist, clenched it, and hit straight out, giving his infuriated wife a black eye in much less than a minute. "An' I say she *shall* 'ave it! Wheer are ye now?"

In answer to this query Mother Mawks might have said that she was "all there," for she returned her husband's blow with interest and force, and in a couple of seconds the happy pair were engaged in a "stand-up" fight, to the intense admiration and excitement of all the inhabitants of the little alley. Every one in the place thronged to watch the combatants and to hear the blasphemous oaths and curses with which the battle was accompanied. In the midst of the affray, a wizened, bent old man, who had been sitting at his door sorting rags in a basket, and apparently taking no heed of the clamour around him, made a sign to Liz.

"Take the kid now," he whispered. "Nobody'll notice. I'll see they don't come arter ye." Liz thanked him mutely by a look, and rushing to the house where the child still lay, seemingly inanimate, on the floor among the soiled clothes, she caught it up eagerly and hurried away to her own poor garret in a tumble-down tenement at the furthest end of the alley. The infant had been stunned by its fall, but under her tender care, and rocked in the warmth of her caressing arms, it soon recovered, though when its blue eyes opened they were full of a bewildered pain such as may be seen in the eyes of a shot bird.

"My pet! my poor little darling!" she murmured over and over again, kissing its wee white face and soft hands; "I wish I was your mother—Lord knows I do! As it is you're all I've got to care for. And you do love me, baby, don't you? just a little,

little bit!" And as she renewed her fondling embraces, the tiny, sad-visaged creature uttered a low crooning sound of baby satisfaction in response to her endearments—a sound more sweet to her ears than the most exquisite music, and which brought a smile to her mouth and a pathos to her dark eyes, rendering her face for the moment almost beautiful. Holding the child closely to her breast, she looked cautiously out of her narrow window, and perceived that the connubial fight was over. From the shouts of laughter and plaudits that reached her ears Joe Mawks had evidently won the day; his wife had disappeared from the field. She saw the little crowd dispersing, most of those who composed it entering the gin-shop, and very soon the alley was comparatively quiet and deserted. By-and-by she heard her name called in a low voice: "Liz! Liz!"

She looked down and saw the old man who had promised her his protection in case Mother Mawks should persecute her. "Is that you, Jim? Come upstairs, it's better than talking out there." He obeyed, and stood before her in the wretched room, looking curiously both at her and the baby. A wiry, wolfish-faced being was Jim Duds, as he was familiarly called, though his own name was the aristocratic and singularly inappropriate one of James Douglas; he was more like an animal than a human creature, with his straggling grey hair, bushy beard, and sharp teeth protruding like fangs from beneath his upper lip. His profession was that of an area-thief, and he considered it a sufficiently respectable calling.

"Mother Mawks has got it this time," he said with a grin which was more like a snarl. "Joe's blood was up an' he pounded her nigh into a jelly. She'll leave ye quiet now; so long as ye pay the hire reg'lar ye'll have Joe on yer side. If so be as there's a bad day, ye'd better not come home at all."

"I know," said Liz, "but she's always had the money for the child, and surely it wasn't much to ask her to let me keep it warm on such a cold night as this."

Jim Duds looked meditative. "Wot makes ye care for that babby so much?" he asked. "'Tain't yourn."

Liz sighed.

"No!" she said sadly. "That's true. But it seems something to hold on to like. See what my life has been!" She stopped and a wave of colour flushed her pallid features. "From a little girl, nothing but the streets—the long cruel streets! and I just a bit of dirt on the pavement—no more; flung here, flung there, and at last swept into the gutter. All dark—all useless!" She laughed a little. "Fancy, Jim! I've never seen the country!"

"Nor I," said Jim, biting a piece of straw reflectively. "It must be powerful fine, with nought but green trees an' posies a' blowin' an' a' growin' everywheres. There ain't many kitching areas there though, I'm told."

Liz went on, scarcely heeding him: "The baby seems to me like what the country must be—all harmless and sweet and quiet; when I hold it so, my heart gets peaceful somehow,—I don't know why."

Again Jim looked speculative. He waved his bitten straw expressively.

"Ye've had 'sperience, Liz. Haint ye met no man like, wot ye could care fur?"

Liz trembled and her eyes grew wild.

"Men!" she cried with bitterest scorn—"no *men* have come my way, only brutes!"

Jim stared, but was silent; he had no fit answer ready. Presently Liz spoke again more softly:

"Jim, do you know I went into a great church to-day?"

"Worse luck!" said Jim sententiously. "Church ain't no use nohow as fur as I can see."

"There was a figure there, Jim," went on Liz, earnestly, "of a Woman holding up a Baby, and people knelt down before it. What do you s'pose it was?"

"Can't say!" replied the puzzled Jim. "Are ye sure 'twas a church? Most like 'twas a moo'seum."

"No, no!" said Liz. "'Twas a church for certain; there were folks praying in it."

"Ah well!" growled Jim, gruffly, "much good may it do 'em! I'm not of the prayin' sort. A woman an' a babby, did ye say? Don't ye get such cranky notions into yer head, Liz! Women 'an babbies are common enough—too common by a long chalk, an' as for prayin' to 'em——" Jim's utter contempt and incredulity were too great for further expression, and he turned away, wishing her a curt "Good-night!"

"Good-night!" said Liz, softly, and long after he had left her, she still sat silent, thinking, thinking, with the baby asleep in her arms, listening to the rain as it dripped, dripped, heavily, like clods falling on a coffin-lid. She was not a good woman—far from it. Her very motive in hiring the infant at so much a day was entirely inexcusable—it was simply to gain money upon false pretences, by exciting more pity than would otherwise have been bestowed on her had she begged for herself alone, without a child in her arms. At first she had carried the baby about to serve as a mere trick of her trade, but the warm feel of its little helpless body against her bosom day after day had softened her heart towards its innocence and pitiful weakness, and at last she had grown to love it with a strange, intense passion,—so much that she would willingly have sacrificed her life for its sake. She knew that its own parents cared nothing for it, except for the money it brought them through her hands, and often wild plans would form in her poor tired brain,—plans of running away with it altogether from the roaring, devouring city, to some sweet humble country

village, there to obtain work, and devote herself to making this one little child happy. Poor Liz! Poor, bewildered, heart-broken Liz! Ignorant London heathen as she was, there was one fragrant flower blossoming in the desert of her soiled and wasted existence—the flower of a pure and guileless love for one of those “little ones” of whom it hath been said by an All-Pitying Divinity unknown to her: “Suffer them to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The dreary winter days crept on apace and as they drew near Christmas, dwellers in the streets leading off the Strand grew accustomed of nights to hear the plaintive voice of a woman, singing in a peculiarly thrilling and pathetic manner, some of the old songs and ballads familiar and dear to the heart of every Englishman.—“The Banks of Allan Water,” “The Bailiff’s Daughter,” “Sally in our Alley,” “The Last Rose of Summer;” all these well-loved ditties she sang one after the other, and though her notes were neither fresh nor powerful they were true and often tender, more particularly in the hackneyed but still captivating melody of “Home, sweet Home.” Windows were opened and pennies freely showered on the street-vocalist, who was accompanied in all her wanderings by a fragile infant, which she seemed to carry with especial care and tenderness. Sometimes too, in the bleak afternoons, she would be seen wending her way through mud and mire, setting her weary face against the bitter east wind, and patiently singing on,—and motherly women coming from the gay shops and stores where they had been purchasing Christmas toys for their own children would often stop to look at the baby’s pinched white features with pity, and would say, while giving their spare pennies, “Poor little thing! Is it not very ill?” And Liz, her heart freezing with sudden terror, would exclaim hurriedly, “Oh, no, no! It is always pale, it is just a little bit weak, that’s all!” And the kindly questioners, touched by the large despair of her dark eyes, would pass on and say no more. And Christmas came—the birthday of the Child-Christ—a feast, the sacred meaning of which was unknown to Liz; she only recognized it as a sort of large and somewhat dull bank-holiday, when all London devoted itself to church-going and the eating of roast beef and plum pudding. The whole thing was incomprehensible to her mind,—but even her sad countenance was brighter than usual on Christmas Eve and she felt almost gay, for had she not, by means of a little extra starvation on her own part, been able to buy a wondrous gold and crimson worsted bird suspended from an elastic string, a bird which bobbed up and down to command in the most lively and artistic manner? And had not her hired baby actually laughed at the clumsy toy?—laughed an elfish and weird little laugh, the first it had ever indulged in? And Liz had laughed too, for pure gladness in the child’s mirth,

and the worsted bird became a sort of uncouth charm to make them both merry.

But after Christmas had come and gone, and the melancholy days, the last beatings of the failing pulse of the Old Year throbbed slowly and heavily away, the baby took upon its wan visage a strange expression,—the expression of worn-out and suffering age. Its blue eyes grew more solemnly speculative and dreamy, and after a while it seemed to lose all taste for the petty things of this world and the low desires of mere humanity. It lay very quiet in Liz's arms; it never cried, and was no longer fretful, and it seemed to listen with a sort of mild approval to the tones of her voice as they rang out in the dreary streets through which, by day and night, she patiently wandered. By-and-by the worsted bird, too, fell out of favour; it jumped and glittered in vain; the baby surveyed it with an unmoved air of superior wisdom,—just as if it had suddenly found out what real birds were like, and was not to be deceived into accepting so poor an imitation of Nature. Liz grew uneasy, but she had no one in whom to confide her fears. She had been very regular in her payments to Mother Mawks, and that irate lady, kept in order by her bull-dog of a husband, had been of late very contented to let her have the child without further interference. Liz knew well enough that no one in the miserable alley where she dwelt would care whether the baby were ill or not. They would tell her, "the more sickly the better for your trade." Besides, she was jealous,—she could not endure the idea of any one touching or tending it but herself. Children were often ailing, she thought, and if left to themselves without doctor's stuff, they recovered sometimes more quickly than they had sickened. Thus soothing her inward tremors as best she might, she took more care than ever of her frail charge, stinting herself that she might nourish it, though the baby seemed to care less and less for mundane necessities, and only submitted to be fed, as it were, under patient and silent protest.

And so the sands in Time's hour-glass ran slowly but surely away, and it was New Year's Eve. Liz had wandered about all day singing her little *répertoire* of ballads in the teeth of a cruel, snow-laden wind—so cruel, that people, otherwise charitably disposed, had shut close their doors and windows, and had not even heard her voice. Thus the last span of the Old Year had proved most unprofitable and dreary; she had gained no more than sixpence; how could she return with only that humble amount to face Mother Mawks and her vituperative fury? Her throat ached—she was very tired, and as the night darkened from pale to deep and starless shadows, she strolled mechanically from the Strand to the Embankment, and after walking some little distance she sat down in a corner close to Cleopatra's Needle,—that mocking obelisk that has looked upon the decay of empires, itself impassive, and that still appears

to say, "Pass on, ye puny generations! I, a mere carved block of stone, shall outlive you all!" For the first time in all her experience the child in her arms seemed a heavy burden. She put aside her shawl and surveyed it tenderly; it was fast asleep, a small, peaceful smile on its thin quiet face. Thoroughly worn-out herself, she leaned her head against the damp stone wall behind her, and clasping the infant tightly to her breast, she also slept,—the heavy dreamless sleep of utter fatigue and physical exhaustion. The solemn night moved on, a night of black vapours; the pageant of the Old Year's death-bed was unbrightened by so much as a single star. None of the hurrying passers-by perceived the weary woman where she slept in that obscure corner, and for a long while she rested there undisturbed. Suddenly a vivid glare of light dazzled her eyes; she started to her feet half-asleep, but still instinctively retaining the infant in her close embrace. A dark form, buttoned to the throat, and holding a brilliant bull's eye lantern, stood before her.

"Come now," said this personage, "this won't do! Move on!"

Liz smiled, faintly and apologetically.

"All right!" she answered striving to speak cheerfully and raising her eyes to the policeman's good-natured countenance, "I didn't mean to fall asleep here. I don't know how I came to do it. I must go home of course."

"Of course!" said the policeman, somewhat mollified by her evident humility, and touched in spite of himself by the pathos of her eyes. Then turning his lamp more fully upon her, he continued "Is that a baby you've got there?"

"Yes," said Liz, half proudly, half tenderly. "Poor little dear! it's been ailing sadly,—but I think it's better now than it was." And encouraged by his friendly tone, she opened the folds of her shawl to show him her one treasure. The bull's eye came into still closer requisition, as the kindly guardian of the peace peered inquiringly at the tiny bundle. He had scarcely looked when he started back with an exclamation:

"God bless my soul!" he cried, "it's dead!"

"Dead!" shrieked Liz, "Oh, no, no! Not dead! *Don't* say so, oh, don't, *don't* say so! Oh, you *can't* mean it! Oh, for God's love say you didn't mean it! It can't be dead, not really *dead*, no, no indeed! Oh, baby, baby! You are not dead, my pet, my angel, not *dead*, oh no!"

And breathless, frantic with fear, she felt the little thing's hands and feet and face, kissed it wildly and called it by a thousand endearing names, in vain—in vain! Its tiny body was already stiff and rigid; it had been a corpse more than two hours.

The policeman coughed, and brushed his thick gauntlet glove across his eyes. He was an emissary of the law, but he had a heart. He thought of his bright-eyed wife at home, and of the

soft-cheeked cuddling little creature that clung to her bosom and crowed with rapture whenever he came near.

"Look here," he said very gently, laying one hand on the woman's shoulder as she crouched shivering against the wall and staring piteously at the motionless waxen form in her arms, "It's no use fretting about it." He paused,—there was an uncomfortable lump in his throat and he had to cough again to get it down. "The poor little creature's gone,—there's no help for it. The next world's a better place than this, you know! there, there! don't take on so about it,"—this as Liz shuddered and sighed—a sigh of such complete despair that it went straight to his honest soul and showed him how futile were his efforts at consolation. But he had his duty to attend to and he went on in firmer tones. "Now, like a good woman, you just move off from here and go home. If I leave you here by yourself a bit, will you promise me to go straight home? I mustn't find you here when I come back on this beat, d'ye understand?" Liz nodded. "That's right!" he resumed cheerily, "I'll give you just ten minutes; you just go straight home."

And with a "Good-night," uttered in accents meant to be comforting, he turned away and paced on, his measured tread echoing on the silence at first loudly, then fainter and fainter, till it altogether died away, as his bulky figure disappeared in the distance. Left to herself, Liz rose from her crouching posture; rocking the dead child in her arms, she smiled. "Go straight home!" she murmured half aloud, "Home, sweet home! Yes, baby, yes, my darling, we will go home together!" And creeping cautiously along in the shadows she reached a flight of the broad stone steps leading down to the river. She descended them one by one; the black water lapped against them heavily, heavily; the tide was full up. She paused; a sonorous deep-toned iron voice rang through the air with reverberating, solemn melody. It was the great bell of St. Paul's tolling midnight,—the Old Year was dead. "Straight home!" she repeated with a beautiful expectant look in her wild, weary eyes. "My little darling! Yes, we are both tired, we will go home! Home, sweet Home! We will go!"

Kissing the cold face of the baby corpse she held, she threw herself forward; there followed a sullen deep splash—a slight struggle—and all was over! The water lapped against the steps heavily, heavily as before; the policeman passed once more, and saw to his satisfaction that the coast was clear; through the dark veil of the sky one star looked out and twinkled for a brief instant, then disappeared again. A clash and clamour of bells startled the brooding night:—here and there a window was opened and figures appeared in balconies to listen. They were ringing in the New Year,—the festival of hope, the birthday of the world! But what were New Years to her, who with white upturned face and arms that embraced an infant in the tenacious grip of death, went

drifting, drifting, solemnly down the dark river, unseen, unpitied of all those who awoke to new hopes and aspirations on that first morning of another life-probation! Liz had gone—gone to make her peace with God—perhaps through the aid of her “hired” baby—the little sinless soul she had so fondly cherished, gone to that sweetest “home” we dream of and pray for, where the lost and bewildered wanderers on this earth shall find true welcome and rest from grief and exile,—gone to that fair, far Glory-World where reigns the Divine Master whose words still ring above the tumult of ages: “See that you despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that their Angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven!”

THE DUKE OF MELTON:

A STORY IN TWO PARTS.

By LADY VIRGINIA SANDARS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIRESS OF HAREDALE," ETC.

PART I.

FEW events could have created greater consternation in the fashionable world than the startling intelligence that the Duke of Melton's yacht, with all on board, including her noble owner and his only son and heir, had perished in one of those fearful storms which occasionally, in early spring, lash the blue but treacherous Mediterranean into the wildest fury.

When the fatal news reached England, the voice of lamentation was heard in many a bereaved home. But though universally popular, the unfortunate duke had no near relatives to bewail his untimely end and that of the delicate son, for whose health this ill-fated expedition had been undertaken.

After the excitement caused by the duke's tragic end had somewhat subsided, which was in about twenty-four hours, every one asked his neighbours, "Who is the heir?" The duke had many cousins, some in the army, some in the navy, one a bishop; but that none of these were his successor was clear from the languid interest they evinced in an event creating such commotion in the great world.

When applied to by the lawyers for information respecting the actual heir, they replied they were personally unacquainted with him, but believed he was in Thibet or Central Africa, in search of the sources of unknown rivers or extinct tribes. Always eccentric, he had become more so, they heard, of late years, and had given up all idea of ever returning to England. In despair the lawyers despatched a letter to Major Selmar, now Duke of Melton, under cover to the colonel of his late regiment, stationed in India, with whom they discovered the major still kept up social relations.

Here, on his return from a long expedition, made in company with his friend, Captain Merrivale, Selmar received the astounding intelligence that he had become Duke of Melton. At first he ridiculed the news, ascribing it to a hoax of his old regiment, famous for its practical jokes; but when he could no longer doubt

the truth of his changed fortunes, he fell into a state of the deepest depression, and it was only through the persuasions of his friend, Oliver Merrivale, that the new duke could be induced to make preparations for his homeward journey; and then only because Captain Merrivale was returning to England on long leave. Therefore the two men, who were fast friends, were enabled to travel together.

"My dear Oliver," said the new-made duke in melancholy accents, "unless you were accompanying me I should never have courage to face England. It is a hard case that a man should become a duke whether he likes it or not."

"Pooh! pooh! my dear fellow," replied his friend, "you will sing to a very different tune by-and-by. At present you are decidedly hipped. I wish I was standing in your shoes. By Jove! wouldn't I have a fine time of it."

"I am sure I wish you were in my position. I declare I feel exactly as though I was going to attend my own funeral."

"And so require me as chief mourner, Sel—— I beg your pardon, duke."

"Oh! please call me Selmar still, and then I shall not feel as if my old self was quite so dead. And this is no laughing matter. Remember, I don't know a soul in England. That unfortunate affair which drove me from it has left me perfectly friendless in my native country. I have no near relatives, except a blind uncle. I can't even boast of having a lawyer, a person most people seem to have some pride in alluding to."

"Ah! ah! old fellow, he won't be long in offering his services; and as to friends—as soon as you shine on the world in the halo of your prosperity, like mushrooms they will spring up in a single night. Then think of the girls! How *they* will smile upon you. Why, you can throw the handkerchief to whom you choose."

"Ah! if *she* had only proved faithful. I could now give her everything the heart of woman could desire."

Here Selmar heaved a tremendous sigh to a completely extinct sentiment.

"And much *she* would have merited such good fortune! Out on such a sordid *she*, say I," exclaimed Oliver indignantly.

"Well, I shall never marry now," replied his friend gloomily.

"May I inquire why you are vowed to celibacy? for I have too much respect for your good sense to credit the idea of your heart being eternally blighted," drily responded the other.

"Perhaps you are right," Selmar smiled; "but still I have a prejudice in favour of being married for myself rather than for what I represent. Women are so terribly mercenary. I have neither your good looks nor fascination, Oliver."

"Pooh! pooh! For a duke you are an Adonis, a fact of which the fair sex will soon convince you, my dear fellow."

"I am glad you think so. But all this is a closed chapter in

my life. What I now bemoan is the upsetting of all my plans of life by these most undesired strawberry leaves."

"Plan of life—bah!" contemptuously exclaimed Oliver; "what plan of life have you ever developed except that of the Wandering Jew? And I tell you frankly, Selmar, I am sick of the Jew life which I have hitherto shared with you. Buried cities, extinct tribes, cannibals and war paint, slaying of beasts—all these excitements have wholly ceased to have any attractions for me, and I have a fresh plan of life, rising in pleasing contrast to the past, namely, to sell out, find some sweet English girl to woo—eventually to wed—a houri with blue eyes and golden hair, for I now loathe the very sight of dark women. And my old aunt promises to leave me her whole fortune if I will only return to England and help to take care of her and her cats."

"In the fulfilment of which good intention I wish you all luck, Oliver, for as I am forced to remain in England, I shall be very glad to keep the only friend I have there also, and to see you steady down as a married man."

Here, utterly prostrated by the overpowering heat of the Red Sea, through which their ship was sullenly ploughing her way, the two men sank into dreamy silence, suddenly interrupted by the duke saying abruptly:

"Oliver, I wish you would change places with me for a space."

"With all the pleasure in life, my dear fellow. I fancy you do catch a little more breeze where I am. Pooh! how hot it is. I'm a Dutchman if I ever go through this purgatory again."

Captain Merrivale rose as he spoke, yawning lazily, stretching his magnificent and slenderly-attired figure with weary indolence.

"No, no; stay where you are," laughed Selmar. "Get all the benefit you can from your ideal breeze; there's a great deal in imagination. And I allude to a much more important change. You assert you would like to stand in my shoes. Supposing you make the trial for a few weeks—say till Parliament meets—and give me the benefit (by assuming your name) of ascertaining my true value in that new world into which, *volens volens*, I am constrained to launch myself?"

"So Quixotic and hopelessly impossible an idea could only have originated in your eccentric brain, Selmar. And as you don't intend to go in for matrimony, why on earth should you care what the world thinks of you? Whatever it thinks, rest assured you will, as Duke of Melton, equally receive its adulation and worship."

"Exactly what I fear. And therefore, if you fall in with my sudden inspiration, I get a chance of coming across some fair girl who may love me for myself—find a wife who marries the man as well as the duke."

"So your broken heart is really mended, Selmar, after all?" laughingly rejoined Merrivale.

"Completely, my dear fellow. But I have a shrinking dread of being again deceived. And I have thought out a plan, which will at first, I have no doubt, appear absurd to you. Yet nothing is easier than for us to assume each other's characters for a short time, as at the family place whither I am bound not a soul knows either of us."

"Impracticable," replied Oliver dubiously. "Yet," he continued reflectively, "even for a few weeks it would be a pleasant novelty to bask in the sunshine of your prosperity. But mind, I expect all its emoluments. No empty dukedoms for me. On this point our understanding must be clear."

"Certainly. And during your regency you can settle with all your creditors in full. And they are not a few, I fancy."

"Then, by Jove! I accept," cried Oliver joyfully. "And really you have so often aided me to escape the chains of matrimony that, upon my word, as you desire it, it becomes a positive duty on my part to help you into its fetters. Hurrah! I am now a duke, I'll thank you to remember."

When Major Selmar had, some twelve years previously, quitted England it was with the firm determination of never returning. Ruined in fortune by his father in speculations closely treading on dishonour, the woman he loved, when fickle Fortune had deserted him, followed in her wake, and Selmar arrived in India with as he deemed a broken heart—a figment in which he indulged long after contempt had cured him of every vestige of soft feeling for his faithless love. But though his heart's wound soon healed, the blow which had struck at his honour through a father's disgrace rankled long and intensely, and it was with feelings of deepest gratitude that he had accepted from the late duke a commission in a regiment bound for foreign service. Selmar was popular in his regiment, for he was an honourable and brave man, though decidedly eccentric, and perhaps, from constant brooding over his past, a little selfish. In outward appearance he was not without some personal advantages. His eyes were pleasant, his mouth good, especially when brightened by one of his rare smiles, his nose—well, his nose was nothing very remarkable for an ordinary mortal, but for a duke it was perfect. Then his figure, though not cast in such perfect proportions as Captain Merrivale's, denoted greater athletic strength, and he could boast of having slain more lions and tigers than any man in India. Indeed, the friendship between Selmar and Oliver had originated in Selmar having rescued the latter, at risk of his own life, from a tiger's claws. And their friendship had been still further cemented by the many tender scrapes out of which the susceptible captain had been dragged by his friend.

Pre-eminently handsome and fascinating, Oliver, who was a desperate flirt, had the unhappy knack of inspiring the temporary object of his affections with a much more enduring passion than

his own ever proved to be. But having given out that he was too poor to indulge in the expensive luxury of a wife, he considered that if some fair one gave too much heed to his honeyed words, this warning exonerated him of all blame. About the gallant captain's looks there could be no two opinions. He had the face and figure of an Apollo, a boyish manner, soft laugh, and oh! such dangerous "heart-devouring" eyes, as one of his victims observed when discussing with a fellow-sufferer the too seductive Oliver's perfections.

Arrived at Melton Abbey, and having taken agent and lawyer into their confidence, the two friends quietly dropped into their assumed positions, Oliver receiving with laughing impudent grace the ovation prepared for the duke, his gay address and handsome person winning golden opinions from all, while the real potentate, sunk into insignificance, was privately occupied with his agent in the serious details of business incident to his position. Though it was known no entertainments would take place at the Abbey until after Christmas, owing to the late duke's tragic end, the Abbey was soon assailed by cards and visitors in shoals.

Notably amongst the former were to be seen those of the Dowager Viscountess Lodore and her three daughters, the Hon. Iris, Daphne, and Hyacinth Parkhurst, the acknowledged beauties of the county, popular, undeniably lovely and amiable, and with well-earned reputations of being outrageous flirts.

Lady Lodore was a widow, but slenderly dowered. When she could let her pretty country residence she migrated to London, in the maternal hope of there mating her handsome daughters. But whether she played her cards too openly, or the young ladies flirted too audaciously, thereby alarming those they most wished to attract, the result was the same—the Misses Parkhurst still retained their maiden names. Not that they did not wish to change them, for they were all equally weary of poverty, humiliating economies and self-made finery! But of what use marrying, they asked, if drudgery and lack of all the æsthetic graces of life were still to be their portion, accompanied perhaps by loss of looks and abstinence from flirtation? Indeed, Hyacinth, the youngest and far the most lovely of the sisters, when one day engaged in the arduous task of packing (which she detested), had declared, as she struggled with a refractory trunk, which refused to close, though both her well-developed sisters were sitting on it, "That if the oldest and ugliest man in the realm were to propose to her when thus engaged, she would unhesitatingly accept him—if only he were rich."

Yet, notwithstanding this bold assertion, the sisters had entered into a solemn compact that, though they would never marry a poor man, neither would they accept any one they could not love. And only a short time previous to the duke's arrival, Hyacinth

had refused the richest *parti* in the county, Sir Richard Bankwell, because he did not fulfil the requirements her heart demanded.

"You are quite right, darling," said Iris, who adored her youngest sister. "You are only twenty, the most beautiful of us all, and must give yourself another chance. It is a pity Sir Richard did not fix his affections upon me. Awful thought, I am thirty to-day, and getting very tired of boys."

It was at this critical juncture of the Misses Parkhursts' destinies that the duke appeared on the tapis, brightening into more solid hope their hitherto fruitless matrimonial speculations.

Great was the excitement at the Dower House. Discreet inquiries were made, peerages were closely studied to discover his age. He was thirty-eight, consequently suitable for any of the sisters. Having freely discussed the matter—amiable to each other even in the important matter of lovers—they agreed that from the moment the duke displayed a decided preference for one of their number the others would retire into the background. The great thing for them was to be first in the field, and thus prevent this great prize from straying to other ground. If the duke hunted they were sure of success, for in the hunting field the sisters were without a rival. Therefore it was with infinite gratification that the Misses Parkhurst listened with more than ordinary attention as the careworn viscountess said one morning at breakfast, with ill-concealed agitation, "Iris, have you heard that the duke invites no guests to the Abbey until after Christmas?"

"Yes, mamma, we have heard the doleful news," replied stately Iris.

"And talked of nothing else ever since; I am sick of the word 'duke,'" said a pretty piquante brunette, whose dark hair and clear olive complexion testified to her being of different parentage to the golden-haired sisters. She was Lady Lodore's niece, temporarily staying beneath her aunt's roof.

"I am sorry you are sick of the duke's name, Kate, for I have invited him here," observed Lady Lodore with emphatic calm.

"You have asked him here?" exclaimed the sisters in a chorus of breathless admiration at their mother's courageous audacity.

"I have so deemed it my duty," replied the viscountess with dignity, adding carelessly, "It is only an act of simple courtesy. Being a bachelor he is naturally living in a state of the greatest discomfort, the late duke's establishment having been dispersed."

"But has he accepted?" eagerly demanded the chorus.

"Why should he not?" grandly demanded Lady Lodore. "He has accepted my invitation, and in the most gracious manner. But there you are, as usual, all talking together. This odious habit has, I am sure, lost you many husbands."

"Well, aunty, my cousins could only marry one man—at least at a time."

The viscountess cast a severe glance at her niece, withering

pretty Kate into silence, while she continued with solemn irritability:

"I am aware how little my daughters value any advice proceeding from my lips, still I trust that for once they will give heed to my counsels, and previous to the duke's arrival, will settle amongst themselves who is to do the agreeable to him."

"Oh! we have arranged all that, mamma," said Iris, glancing with a loving smile at her blue-eyed sister Hyacinth.

"If I might be allowed an opinion," continued the dowager with increased solemnity, "I should say Daphne has the best right to be put forward on this occasion. You, Iris, have had longer opportunities. And as Hyacinth—the mother's voice rose reproachfully—has seen fit to refuse the richest *parti* in the county——" Here Lady Lodore suddenly broke off in her peroration, exclaiming, "Good gracious, Daphne, there is that disfiguring spot again appeared on your nose! Why—why will it always come when I most wish you to look your best?" she cried in tones of despair.

"You had better ask my nose, mamma. I did not invite the spot," rather sullenly answered poor Daphne.

"Put a black patch on it, Daphy," said Kate laughing.

"To attract greater attention to the offending blemish," replied Daphne with a smile and quickly restored good-humour.

"Had it been anywhere else she might have put on a patch, they are very becoming," observed Lady Lodore with reflective mournfulness.

The girls all laughed merrily, and Kate in consoling accents observed, "Don't fret, aunty, Daphne's nose will be all right before the great man arrives."

"He comes to-morrow," was the despairing answer.

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the sisters, completely taken aback.

"Hurrah! cousins, now for your feathers and war paint," cried Kate, waving a very pretty little hand in the air. "I back you, dear Cynthy," she whispered, putting her arm round Hyacinth's waist.

"Ah! Kate, it is my week for housekeeping. Fancy the toil of unusual hospitality! I almost wish he was not coming," sighed Hyacinth.

At the Abbey Oliver was beginning to chafe beneath the splendours of his borrowed plumage. For the duke, absorbed in business, could devote little time to his friend's amusement. Therefore it was with no small satisfaction that he hailed the opportunity of change and excitement offered by Lady Lodore's invitation.

Her note was delivered to Oliver by a valet lately taken into the duke's service but not into his confidence. Tossing it across the table to Selmar, Oliver said, "What do you say to accepting this invitation? I hear the girls are perfectly lovely—amusing and

rather fast; we might have some fun. It is confoundedly slow here, and I am heartily sick of the weight of your strawberry leaves."

Oliver yawned furiously as he spoke.

"And you look forward to indulging in your favourite pastime, Oliver?" observed Selmar gravely. "I fear it is dull for you here at present. But remember, if I accept this invitation, you cannot, in your present situation, indulge in the slightest approximation to flirtation without bringing discredit on both yourself and me."

"It would certainly be rather awkward if one of these hours fell in love with your humble servant; but only accept, and I promise not to be too irresistible. And who knows but that amongst those beauties you may not stumble on your future duchess?"

Selmar smiled rather contemptuously, saying:

"For your sake, and yours only, I fling myself among strangers. But mind, my eyes will be ever watching you."

"As a cat watches a mouse?" laughed Oliver.

"Precisely."

A few days later the duke and Oliver, leaving valet and luggage to follow, walked leisurely over to the Dower House after their day's shooting. The former was in unusually bright spirits, whereas Oliver was taciturn, not to say a little sulky.

As the two men turned into Lady Lodore's well-kept approach, the cloud overhanging Oliver's brow darkened still further, and he suddenly burst out, saying:

"I wish you would release me from this ridiculous position in which you have inveigled me, Selmar. If these young ladies are as beautiful as represented, I know I can't trust myself. I know I can't."

"In other words, Oliver, you mean to say that even to oblige your best friend you are unable to abstain from your contemptible weakness for a few weeks."

The duke spoke with withering scorn.

"Don't be hard on a fellow, Selmar. I am but flesh and blood after all. Mine is an amiable weakness. I am not made of marble, but of the most malleable clay. I am impressionable, Selmar, very. Suppose I fall in love?"

"Suppose the moon is made of green cheese," contemptuously replied the duke.

"I only say suppose, Selmar. I wish to provide for contingencies."

"Well, if you find your heart's citadel giving tokens of weakness, raise the siege and fly temptation like a man."

"And supposing—mind, I am still only supposing—the girl falls in love with me? What then? Are we to fly together, as you so airily propose, for her to discover she has taken flight with a scoundrel instead of a duke?"

"There's no fear of such a catastrophe where a man of honour

is concerned," replied Selmar grandly. "And indeed, my dear Oliver, a little abstinence from flirtation will serve as a tonic to strengthen your character."

"I am glad you think so. But I beg you to remember that tonics are apt to increase the malady they are intended to cure, if indulged in too long. And so I trust the choice of your future duchess will not be unnecessarily prolonged."

Here a dismal and prolonged howl caused both men to equally arrest their steps and conversation. But they quickly discovered the doleful sounds to proceed from a rabbit hole, in which a small dog was imprisoned.

Regardless of Oliver's warnings that they would be late for dinner, the duke, devoted to animals, set to work to release the prisoner, and soon a starving little skye-terrier lay panting in his arms.

"You are in luck, Selmar," rather jealously observed Oliver. "Depend upon it, this dog is a pet of one of the Misses Parkhurst. What a glorious opening for courtship!"

In the pretty drawing-room of the Dower House, attired on this most important day in seductively becoming tea-gowns, sat Lady Lodore and the expectant duchesses, awaiting in feverish excitement the arrival of their guests. Captain Merrivale had been but cursorily alluded to by the viscountess "as a friend staying with the duke, and whom consequently she was forced to invite also."

It was the witching hour of five o'clock tea. The carefully shaded lamps shed a most becoming radiance over the sirens arrayed for conquest. Stately Iris, presiding over the tea table, looked a very Juno in crimson and black lace. Daphne, whose nose was—thanks to a little chalk, for the girls never powdered—restored to its pristine beauty, appeared a perfect harmony in azure blue and silver, while the lovely Hyacinth was a dream of beauty in virgin white.

What these perfect costumes—entirely the production of their own brains and hands—had cost the wearers in labour and thought, to say nothing of their mother's black satin, was known only to themselves.

Surely such a combination of talent and industry deserved to be crowned with success.

The time had long passed at which the visitors ought to have arrived, and a nervous silence, engendered by protracted waiting, had stolen over all the ladies. Every surmise as to the duke's tastes and habits had been exhausted. Of his personal advantages the young ladies were fully assured. For had they not seen him in church, and decided at once that the Adonis gracing the ducal pew could be no other than its owner? Upon his friend they bestowed no second thought, having at first sight dubbed him insignificant-looking and second-rate.

Breaking a silence which had remained undisturbed some minutes, Lady Lodore, glancing at her two younger daughters, observed plaintively :

"I do wish, girls, you would lay aside that horrible knitting."

Hyacinth and Daphne, who were both occupied with a crimson knickerbocker stocking, looked up and smiled.

"What will the duke say if he sees you thus occupied? You have no brothers, and the very colour of your wool betrays you are not employed for the poor," added the mother querulously.

"We cannot afford to lose old friends before we have made new ones, mamma," replied Hyacinth gaily. "These stockings are for Major Banger and Captain Smithers, who have so often given us a mount."

"Major Banger! Captain Smithers!" repeated Lady Lodore contemptuously. "Oh! what incorrigible flirts you are."

"So we acknowledge ourselves to be, mamma," said Hyacinth good-humouredly. "But good, honest, open flirts, who, when married, intend to entirely close the pleasant volume of flirtation, which will at first be sadly dull, I fear."

Here Hyacinth started, raising her hand to enjoin silence, while the sound of carriage wheels called all the ladies to attention, and Lady Lodore deftly seizing a stocking right and left from her refractory daughters' fingers, flung them beneath the sofa, saying angrily :

"I will be obeyed for once. Here is the duke!"

At the same moment the door flew violently open, and Kate rushed in, her pretty face crimson with excitement, her hair in wildest disorder, and her dress and hands soiled with earth, while in breathless words she exclaimed :

"Tiger is found! But oh! he is in a rabbit hole. Please send some one at once to dig him out, for I can't manage it."

Lady Lodore remained speechless from anger. But Iris, rising from the dignified pose she had assumed in expectancy of the duke's arrival, took poor little Kate by the shoulders and pushed her towards the door, saying authoritatively :

"For goodness sake, Kate, go and make yourself fit to be seen. Here is the duke."

Kate shook herself free from her cousin's grasp, replying irreverently :

"Bother the duke! Besides, it's not him; only his valet and things. And I won't go, but stay and disgrace you all, unless you promise at once to send some one to Tiger's help. What do I care for a hundred million dukes in comparison to the dog darling mamma gave me?" sobbed Kate passionately.

But her tears were quickly arrested at the sound of a feeble little bark in the passage, and in another moment the Duke of Melton and Major Selmar were announced (for it was decided the duke

should retain his original name, as he and Oliver were distantly related, and could term themselves cousins).

As they entered, with one bound Tiger sprang from his rescuer's arms into those of the enchanted Kate, who, unmindful of all present, covered him with kisses, while Lady Lodore and her daughters came forward and greeted their guests with the easy grace of well-bred women of the world.

"By Jove! they are divinities, and I am lost," mentally ejaculated Oliver, while aloud he gallantly observed, "I was told your daughters numbered the Graces, Lady Lodore, whom they so fitly represent, but I perceive that you have also a Hebe in your household."

He glanced at untidy Kate, who now that she held Tiger in her arms was beginning to feel rather crestfallen at her own appearance, but yet did not like to leave the room, wishing to see the fun.

"My niece, Miss Morden, duke; hardly out of the schoolroom," said Lady Lodore, hoping this might serve as an excuse for Kate's disorderly appearance.

"Then it was not one of the Misses Parkhursts' dog which you so gallantly rescued," said Oliver, addressing his friend, with as near an approach to a wink as he dared indulge in.

"Oh! I am so much obliged to you; more than words can express, Major Selmar," said Kate, coming out of her corner and offering with a deep blush her little earth-stained hand, which the duke took with a smile. He had experienced some disappointment on finding it was to this pretty child, and not to one of the stately beauties that he had done good service. But he felt fully rewarded as he looked into the depths of the liquid brown eyes raised so gratefully to his; and discovering that Kate had but lately returned from India, they soon had many topics in common, and being left quite in the cold by the other ladies, who were completely occupied with Oliver, the duke and Kate quickly became on friendly terms. She, with the sweet ingenuousness of extreme youth, confiding to him how she had lately left home and parents because the climate of India was injuring her health, and how, to comfort her at parting, darling mother had given her Tiger.

"And we love each other, don't we, Tiger, and talk together of mamma?" said the girl, stooping to kiss the dog on its head. When she looked up again her eyes were full of tears, and, much touched, the duke observed gently:

"Dogs are sometimes truer friends than human beings, Miss Morden."

Here Iris, reproaching herself for neglect of the duke's friend, inquired if he would not have some tea, and Kate slipping out of the room, he approached the table, where Oliver, intoxicated by an English freshness of beauty to which his eye had long been

unaccustomed, was conversing with guilty brilliancy, every resolution of not flirting melting away beneath the sunny glances of the fair sisters. Beautiful as they were, all three, he had quickly decided that Hyacinth was the most brilliant of this bright constellation.

In the meanwhile Lady Lodore was sitting on what is metaphorically termed thorns. For, hating to bide with idle fingers, and maintaining she could even talk better when occupied, Hyacinth, regardless of her mother's convulsive becks and frowns, had extracted her work from beneath the dark depths of the sofa, and was again busily knitting.

"You can have no conception how refreshing it is to see you occupied in such homely work. In India, our ladies are so enervated by the heat, they can do nothing but read novels," said Oliver in his softest voice, watching with admiration the clinking pins moving so rapidly in Hyacinth's slender white fingers. "What fortunate brothers are yours to have such kindly workers in their sisters," he whispered insinuatingly.

"We have no brothers, duke," replied Hyacinth demurely, glancing at her mother.

"Ah! you are even better employed? For charitable purposes, of course."

"Well, yes and no, for Captain Smithers, for whom my work is destined, is, I fear, not overburdened with this world's goods," replied Hyacinth with arch boldness.

"Happy Smithers!" whispered Oliver, inwardly wondering "who the deuce Smithers was," deciding he must be one of the innumerable adorers he had heard discussed in conjunction with the Misses Parkhurst.

But the thorns here becoming unbearable to Lady Lodore, she groaned audibly, causing Oliver to look round in astonishment, while the duke gave a loud admonitory cough, recalling his recalcitrant friend to order, and a few minutes later the whole party retired to prepare for dinner.

"Hyacinth, you will break my heart," almost sobbed Lady Lodore, as together they mounted the stairs.

"I should be sorry to do that, dear mamma," replied the girl coaxingly. "But depend upon it, I know my own business best; and I will never sail under false colours."

So saying, she kissed her mother and ran up to her room laughing. She thought the duke the handsomest man she had ever seen in her life, and the most fascinating.

(To be continued.)

DISDAINFUL DI.

By EVELINE MICHELL FARWELL.

CHAPTER I.

"**N**OW, Frank, get a good start, and let them see that a Douglas can still show 'em the way. Get the far side of the covert, he's pretty safe to break there, and it's nice open country, nothing to stop you. Give the mare her head, and she'll never put you down."

Certainly, the big grey, with her sloping shoulders, grand quarters, and clean flat legs, looked good enough for most things—but what about the man? Frank Douglas sat his horse well enough, still there was an indescribable something which made one less sure of him than of Moonstone, but then horses are far easier to judge than men.

He was good enough to look at in his way, tall, well-built, with eyes which should redeem the plainest face, in the opinion of most women, and Frank's was anything but plain. His uncle was of a very different stamp, small, wiry, with quick keen eyes. Sitting in his saddle as though he grew there, General Douglas looked a sportsman all over, and although a slight attack of paralysis resulting from a sun-stroke in India, had robbed —shire of its best man to hounds, he still turned up at most meets, and saw more sport than many who were by way of going. He was a hardened old bachelor, and had just come home to settle at Douglas Court, intending to make Frank, who had been left an orphan at ten years old, his heir. He had seen little of him except during some summer holidays, when he had been home on leave, and had asked Frank to keep house with him at the Court. As a guardian he had been both generous and lenient, caring but little what work was done, either at Eton or Oxford.

"I don't want the lad to be a scholar," he used to say; "as long as he's a gentleman and a horseman, I'm satisfied."

As to horses, Frank had pretty nearly *carte blanche*; but his uncle didn't think a great deal of his stud when it arrived at the Court, and had insisted on Frank making his first appearance in —shire on old Moonstone, as fine a hunter as ever crossed a country. Look at her now, quivering with excitement as she listens for the music she knows and loves so well. She has not long to wait, for scarcely have hounds entered covert than there comes a whimper, swelling quickly into chorus, and they

crash out of the gorse well in the wake of as good a fox as ever saved his brush.

At the first sound, General Douglas had made for a lane running at right angles from the covert; galloping up this, followed by many of the field, he drew rein at the top, and saw the pack streaming along the valley below, while a field in front of them, a dark brown streak slipped through the fence. Several men and two ladies were well up, some in the same field with hounds, others a little to the left, but where was Frank? The general's eyes were good enough, and there was no mistaking Moonstone at any distance, but where the devil was she? Not in the first flight, nor yet in the second. Good heavens! *that* can't be Moonstone.

To the right of hounds a crowd of people jostling through a gate, and there, last of the jostlers, chafing and fretting her heart out, is a big grey. *Not* Moonstone? Yes! there—not sailing along, showing the way as a Douglas should, not even riding jealous with the few who mean going, but crushing with a hundred people through gates and gaps, the hundred and first is Frank Douglas. If the general swore a mighty oath, is it to be wondered at? Turning old Conundrum's head, he rode slowly homewards; perhaps it was well for Frank that he did so. The Douglas's were a hot-tempered race; but it was soon over, and by the time Moonstone's hoofs rang out a challenge in the courtyard, the general had himself made Frank's excuses. It was the lad's first day in a strange country. He might have got a bad start after all, and some officious beast might have led him wrong with shouts of bogs, or bosh of some sort. The lad *must* ride. There had never been a Douglas yet who couldn't lick the field, no matter where.

So day after day the old general sent Frank out, and day after day Frank showed himself more and more deft at opening gates for ladies, squiring them through gaps, and generally "philandering," as his uncle testily put it. The general had in his day been quite "the flower of maidenly pets," but he had never been so far gone as to put any woman, however beautiful, before a fox!

"No girl worth her salt would wish it," he used to say. "A woman who knows anything knows that if a man's not a sportsman, he's not much of a man, anyway."

Another grievance was that Frank didn't know when a woman *was* worth her salt, and when she wasn't, at least, to his uncle's thinking. There was a certain doctor's daughter, to whose bridle rein he stuck with a persistence which, otherwise applied, would have placed him well up with hounds. Katie White was pretty enough of her kind, but the general only went in for thoroughbreds. It would have been sufficiently bad to see a Douglas road-riding with any one, but with Katie White! Bah! it was

intolerable; and at the hunt ball the general's determined patience utterly collapsed: Frank danced with her, sat out with her, "spent the whole evening with her," he grunted, with many an angry adjective smothered in his moustache.

The general did not enjoy that ball, first-rate though it was, but Frank seemed to do so despite the grimness of his uncle's countenance, which looked rebuke at him each time he passed with Katie on his arm.

Another nephew of the general's appeared that night, his sister's son, Keith Fane, who had followed his uncle's profession. They knew but little of each other, however, and the meeting was an unexpected one to both, Captain Fane's geographical knowledge had never fixed the locality of Douglas Court, and his uncle had no notion that he even knew the Montgomeries, with whom he had come.

With one of them he was on terms somewhat passing the bounds of mere acquaintanceship, thought the shrewd old soldier, as Keith valed past him, steering sweet stately Di Montgomerie through mysterious mazes with consummate skill. That the love of thoroughbreds was not altogether extinct in the Douglas race, the general was forced to admit as he watched Keith's clean-cut lofty head bending to the little shapely one, not so very far below his own. It would certainly be hard for any man honestly to pick a hole in Miss Montgomerie. I say honestly, because there were many who would fain, however falsely, cavil at charms which Di too clearly showed were not for them. She never allowed people to be under any illusion on that point, and it was to this she owed her nickname of Disdainful Di!

That Keith had little cause to cavil seemed beyond a doubt, yet could the general have heard the curt sentences, almost fierce in their intensity, which dropped from that canary-coloured moustache, he would have found that in the nephew who bore a stranger's name the Douglas temper was as strongly developed as the Douglas taste.

Di *was* a thoroughbred. Through all the dropping fire of angry accusations she bore herself unmoved, and that she even listened only a keen observer could have told. Yet had Keith been one whit less excited he must have felt the tremour of the slender hand upon his arm, although he could not see an occasional flash, which threatened danger, in those great grey-blue eyes.

"I hope you are satisfied," he is saying wrathfully.

"With what? With you?"

"Hardly," he answers bitterly. "What a flirt you are! What would you like for a present?"

No answer, but the haughty little head rears itself even higher than its wont, and danger signals flash out beneath the long dark lashes. Keith continues, "I should like to give you something nice, you know, when you marry Harborough."

The slender hand drops from his arm, and looking straight into his eyes Di says, "Are you not ashamed of yourself? You have no right to speak to me like this."

"You needn't tell me that, I know it too well. I will apologize if you like."

"I don't think that would do much good," says Di; then her tone softens and she adds, "Don't make me lose my temper, Keith. It's no good quarrelling, we don't see each other so often. Stop talking like a costermonger on Saturday night, and let us go and sit down somewhere."

They go into the corridor, and make for a cushioned window-seat at the far end. "Now," says Di, as she sinks into the corner, "what is the matter? What do you want?"

"What do I want? What I can't get, and what I suppose Harborough will."

"Stop!" says Di peremptorily, "I won't have this. Look at me and tell me if you *really* believe I have even flirted with Lord Harborough."

Keith does look at her. How lovely she is! The stately white throat supporting the shapely head so proudly, the great eyes flashing as they challenge him to prove his charge, and an angry, yet most beautiful flush burning her cheeks. As he looks at her his eyes change and lighten, and the love he shows so strangely takes possession of them. He answers slowly, "No! I don't really believe you ever do flirt. I *know* you don't when I look at you. You haven't got it in your face."

"Then why don't you trust me? You might. I never do anything."

"I can't," he says. "You don't know what it is. I've got a beastly jealous nature. I've always told you that the woman I love will have a miserable time of it; if she loves me, that is. I make you wretched as well as myself."

"But why?"

"Why? Because I simply can't stand your looking at, or speaking to any man."

"It's very stupid of you. I *can't* spend every moment with you. As it is we shall have the whole county discussing our affairs, and what *is* the good of that when it can't come to anything."

"No good," he says drearily. "I'd better go. I was a fool to come. I wish to heaven you were a beggar, child; then I'd exchange into the Indian battalion, and ask you to come with me. I wonder if you would? You couldn't speculate and lose all your money, could you?"

She shook her head. "I'm afraid not. It's too much tied up, and there are too many trustees. I don't get a chance. But, Keith, would you really like it?"

"*Like* it! If you cared for me as I do for you, you wouldn't ask me," he answered passionately.

"But—you hate India. You used to say you would rather die than go back."

"Because it meant leaving you behind. But that's neither here nor there. You're not a beggar, and you can't be one, so there's an end of it. We'd better go back. I dare not stop here; I can't stand it. I know what it comes to."

"Tell me first, do you really mean that you would give up everything and everybody, hunting and all, to take me out to India?"

"Yes," he says. "Child, will you never understand how I love you?"

The interval between the dances is over. Every one has gone back to the ball-room, except two couples at the other end. Di slips her hand into his as she answers, "I think I'm satisfied; but why do you mind about my miserable money? I shouldn't mind, at least not much, if you had heaps and I hadn't a farthing."

"I wish to God I had."

"You would love me all the more if I were poor," she went on, "so why shouldn't you let me——"

"It's utterly different; the man ought to have the money, and the woman needn't have any."

"That's nonsense."

"It's not—it's sober fact. When a man makes love to a woman as I've done to you, and hasn't a penny to keep her, he deserves to be kicked out of the house. I never meant to do it. You would never have known if Clonmel hadn't put you down that day with the A——. I thought it was all up," he ends with a shudder.

"Poor old Keith," says Di consolingly. "I'm not so *very* sorry we got into that ditch."

Keith stoops his head suddenly, and kisses the hand resting on the back of the sofa. "Will you follow me to-morrow?" he says. "I'm going to ride Kildare, and I'll give you a good lead."

"I don't know," she answers doubtfully. "There are a lot of us going out. The Bristowes and my cousins, and Maud and Bertie."

"A gaudy lot!" Captain Fane impolitely remarks. "You'd better follow me. Let me pilot you. I've led you ill enough other ways, but we'll go straight to-morrow. You *will* follow me?"

She is silent for a minute, then she looks up and says, "I'm afraid I should follow you to the devil, if you asked me."

Keith laughs more than content, then says, "No danger of that now. I've changed my track. I was making pretty fast in his direction two years ago, but angels without wings stop one sometimes. You know, child," he adds very tenderly, "I want to make sure of seeing you again somewhere, however we may be separated here, so I have made up my mind to get to Heaven if I can."

CHAPTER II.

"Ten acres of copse on a gentle slope,
By a belt of gorse surrounded,
All grass, as far as the eye could reach
By the line of blue hills bounded."

A PROMISING description, and one that fitted Bentley thicket well. It was a very favourite meet, and there was a tremendous field the day after the hunt ball; men who rode, men who tried to, men who didn't. Sportswomen, frivolous women, flirting women, weight carriers, thoroughbreds, screws, cobs, ponies, while landaus, dog-carts, gigs and other abominations abounded.

Never mind. Once get away from Belton with a straight goer, and the crowd won't trouble you. The general is there of course; also Frank, on Moonstone again. He has been riding his own horses lately, as his uncle's interest in his mounts had flagged considerably, but this morning he had asked him to ride the grey, adding, "And if you *can* go, Frank, for heaven's sake go to-day." But "go" Frank can't and won't, according to his uncle's meaning that is, although, as regards Katie White, he seems already gone. He is talking earnestly to her now, pleasantly too, to judge by her face. She looks very pretty this morning, although her figure does not fit her habit as does Miss Montgomerie's. I put it this way advisedly. There are figures which seem moulded expressly for a habit, while to others no habit can be moulded. Many hunting women are as fain to cavil at "Disdainful Di," as are those men of whose very existence she seems almost ignorant. Once your friend, she will cleave to you through thick and thin, but few are the favoured ones who pass the bounds of mere acquaintance, and of the many who talk so glibly of "Disdainful Di," few dare to drop the Miss Montgomerie before her. This being so, her beauty is a challenge, and one which in the hunting field it were sheer madness to take up. However pleased a woman may be with herself and her turn-out, put her by Di, and in ten minutes the smartest of them all will feel herself a sweep. Some declare it's her long waist, others say it's her seat, she sits so square, sure to give her horse a sore back, &c.; but whatever it is, she is a true Diana, and rules right royally in the hunting field. The bay thoroughbred which carries her to-day is worthy of her. Despite the steeplechases he has scored, he goes kind and gentle as possible with Di, and has never yet been known to "falter or to fail."

Keith Fane had kept away from her until hounds were thrown into covert. He knew the curiosity of crowds well enough, and had, moreover, shrewd suspicions that Di had been told by more than one member of her family that she had made a frightful fool of herself last night. He was well up in the signs of bad weather, and although she would own to nothing in the few minutes' talk

they had had that morning, he noted that she was more determinately "Disdainful Di" than he had ever seen her, and no whit disposed to cancel his appointment as her pilot. Perhaps he felt a little compunction for the pressure he had brought to bear last night, but "Anyhow, no one can accuse you of running after me," he had said with a sad sort of smile.

Once mounted, however, Kildare gave him no time for reflection or remorse, for up to now he had rarely been on all four legs at once. He was a grand horse, standing sixteen one, deep in the girth, well ribbed up, with good square hocks and a clear sparkling eye, one who would face anything.

Directly hounds were thrown in, Captain Fane ranged up to Miss Montgomerie, and stationing themselves at a likely corner from which they could see well into covert, they looked business-like enough to satisfy even General Douglas. He noted approvingly that Keith knew better than to talk, even with such temptation beside him as "Disdainful Di." Hark! they are away, their fox making straight for Black Banks, about as stiff a line of country as you'll find in —shire. Even Keith's skill and science cannot baffle Kildare's rush as he tears down the hill, bounded by a stiffish fence. Powerless to check him, Keith sets his teeth, and sits tight. Well it is that he does so, for barely rising, the horse crashes right through briar and bramble, which do their best to leave him riderless; but Keith remains, and turns his head to say, "Made a hole for you, Di." It is not wanted though, for as he speaks she lands safely at his side. On they go at racing speed, Kildare steadying field by field and jumping grandly. By the time their fifth fence is negotiated most of the field are choked off. The pace is tremendous, and the fences big enough to make most men think twice about them with a horse a trifle blown.

The master and his sister, a noted steeplechase rider, who is stopping with them, a young cotton manufacturer to whom money means the best hunters to be bought, and one of the whips, are all that remain of the mighty muster at the thicket. The huntsman came to grief a field or two back, and his is not the only empty saddle. "But no time to pause, for over the meads they sweep, with a scent breast high." Tally ho! there he goes, gliding along the hedge-row up the hill in front of them.

"By Jove!" Keith mutters, and takes a look at Di.

"All right," she says quietly, and on they go; the only two who do, for at the top of the hill runs a post and rails, which might well cause "the firmest cheek to blanch, the sternest courage fail," about five feet four, and as stiff as they make them.

Keith didn't half like it. It's well enough to risk your own and your hunter's necks, but when it comes to chancing the one you hold dear above all else on earth, with the possibility that *you* may get over safe, and she mayn't, it isn't pleasant. Still,

to avoid it they must lose at least a field, and that Di will not do that, Keith knows full well. With the most earnest prayer he ever breathed that Kildare may smash the top rail, he puts him at it, and the horse answers to his touch, though not to his prayer. He jumps it clear, and Keith turns with his heart in his mouth. Di knows her horse, and does not slacken speed too much. She has absolute faith in her bay, and it is not misplaced. Gathering himself together, with a mighty leap he clears the rail as though it were a hurdle.

"Thank God," says Keith devoutly. "Well done, my darling."

They are now the only two with hounds, and as they gallop down the long grass field, they break from scent to view, and in another moment the brave old fox is pulled down, and Keith's cheer reached the ears of the master hard behind. He and the whip are soon up, and as the former offers Di the brush, he says, "Of all you have won, Miss Montgomerie, this is the most gloriously gained."

"Well! it isn't often one gets the chance of jumping five feet odd of timber at the end of a run like this," responds Di laughing.

"Thank Heaven! No," says the M. F. H. Five minutes ago Keith would have said "Amen!" but all his fear for Di is forgotten in the delicious pride a man feels in the woman he loves. She is now praising and petting Bay Beauty in ruinous fashion, Keith declares, to which she retorts that Kildare would go far kinder if he were praised a bit.

"Well, he does deserve it," Captain Fane admits. "I could have kissed him for the way he took that rail if you hadn't been behind me."

"Did you think I should be jealous?" Di queried mischievously.

"No, I never thought of that, but I wanted the brute to make a hole for you."

"Thank you!" said Di, turning up her chin disdainfully. Just then the old general rode up, and making straight for Captain Fane, said: "How long do you stop down here, Keith?"

"Only till Saturday."

"Well, then, come on to me and stop as long as you like, the longer the better. I can mount you five days a week, pretty well, too, though I've nothing to beat that horse of yours. He's a grand goer."

"That he is," said Keith; "I never wish for a better."

"Bring him with you, of course," said his uncle, "and anything else you like. I've two spare stalls and a loose box."

"Thanks; but Kildare and my charger represent my stud."

"All the better, then you'll be able to exercise mine; shall expect you to dinner on Saturday."

Could any man refuse such an offer as this? Keith could not anyhow. That he were wiser not to stay near Di he knew, but when the tempter baits the hook you long for with unlimited hunters, can any true sportsman look the other way? Our friend scarcely struggled, but swallowed the bait with such avidity that Saturday saw him landed at the Court. To his surprise he found his uncle alone there. The night of the Belton meet Frank had informed the general that he had proposed to Miss White at the ball and that she had accepted him. "Naturally," said his uncle. Then Frank flared up, so did the general, and finally Frank left the house with the declared intention of marrying Katie forthwith, which he accordingly did: he had enough of his own to live on, and chose to take his own way, caring little that his name was struck out of his uncle's will, and that Douglas Court would know him no more. It is probably quite as bad to be forced to hunt and badgered to go when you don't want to as it is to be unable to do either when you do.

In Keith the general found a nephew after his own heart, and very loth was he to part with him when the end of his leave drew near. Casting about for some means of keeping him he bethought himself of Di Montgomerie, and one night in the smoking-room, when Keith was deep in dreary calculations of the many months that must elapse before he saw Di again, wondering vaguely whether his uncle had any influence, whether if he had he would use it to get him an appointment, and whether if he got it he could ask her to marry him upon it, the general electrified him by saying suddenly:

"Do you ever think of marrying, Keith?"

Captain Fane started, "Marrying? I?"

"Yes, you; why not?"

"Can't on my pay."

"No! but you will have more than your pay." His nephew stared, and the general continued, "You see, Keith, Douglas Court wants a mistress; I shall never marry, and I'd sooner see Di Montgomerie at the head of my table than any woman in the length and breadth of Europe."

Keith's pipe fell with a crash, but his hopes rose proportionately, and so it came about that the next hunting season Douglas Court no longer lacked a mistress. Luckily Keith's jealousy did not embrace his uncle, for the general vied with him in bending to the châtelaine's commands; but happiness agreed with Keith, and when once Di got the bridle fairly on, her delicate hands seemed in a fair way to rout the demon utterly.

As uncle and nephew agreed, "For curing a restless, fidgetty brute, whether biped or quadruped, there's no one like

"Our dear, disdainful Di."

“ERE THE LILACS FADE.”

OH! sad, cold face that once was my delight,
Alone you stand among gay Fashion's throng;
And my heart waxeth warm at the mere sight,
And sings once more love's old forgotten song.
Your favourite lilacs bloom upon your breast,
Their subtle perfume steals across my brow,
Recalls that night when we said "Love is best."
Alas! Beloved, do you say so now?
A look, dear, in your wistful eyes to-night,
Reveals to me that you too know regret.
Were we so wise to struggle 'gainst love's might?
Do both our hearts not ache with passion's fret?
Say, ere the lilacs fade and swiftly die,
Shall love's sweet kiss stifle sad Memory's sigh?

NELLIE FORTESCUE-HARRISON.

A FALSE START.

By HAWLEY SMART.

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "BAD TO BEAT," "THE OUTSIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EDITH MOLECOMBE.

"WHAT did you mean by saying you didn't know whether to be glad or sorry?" asked Maurice, as soon as he had recovered from his first surprise.

"It looks rather as if the charge brought against you by these two terrible women was true, doesn't it?"

"It does rather," replied Maurice, smiling, as he dropped the cheque into his waistcoat-pocket, "but we know that it is not so. I have a perfectly clear conscience on that score, and just think, Bessie, what we can do with the money. It will put us perfectly straight with the Tunnleton tradespeople—no bother about writing to your trustees now, my dear—enable me to stop Badger's mouth with a handsome cheque on account, and leave us a comfortable balance besides in the local bank.

"But what will Mr. Chylton think when you cash the cheque, Maurice? You know you have never told him anything about Uncle John's wedding present. He believes thoroughly in you, but the presenting such a big cheque as this on the top of this charge will look so dreadfully as if you had won the money by betting."

"What a clever little woman it is!" rejoined Maurice, admiringly. "You are right; it would. I will take it up and get it cashed at my banker's in town."

This Maurice accordingly did, but he then committed the strange oversight of paying two hundred pounds into his account at the Tunnleton Bank. This was even more likely to induce the people at the bank to put a false construction on his sudden acquirement of money than if he had put in John Madingley's cheque. The story of the sporting parson who had won such a good stake over the Chesterfields was by this well known to the inferior strata of Tunnleton; the bank clerks looked upon Maurice, not with the horror of Generals Maddox and Praun, but with no little admiration. The ostlers and the fly-drivers had by this time heard of Mr.

Enderby as a rare judge of racing, and accorded him no little veneration in consequence. He had mounted a far higher pinnacle in the eyes of these godless understrappers of the stable than any eloquence in the pulpit could ever have placed him on. Sad to say, they took more interest in the ways of this world than in the preparing of themselves for another.

Mr. Rumford, the butcher, and his brethren, when they found all their arrears promptly discharged, were similarly convinced that the report of Mr. Enderby's racing proclivities was true, and these good people received it and looked upon it in very different lights; some of them laughed, and thought a sporting curate rather a joke than otherwise; but there were others more straightlaced who shook their heads at the idea of a clergyman dabbling in such a pursuit, the opinion of these latter somewhat mollified by the comforting fact that they had at all events got their money. In short, at the end of a fortnight from that Newmarket week Maurice Enderby might as well have endeavoured to convert the betting-ring as to induce the bulk of Tunnleton to believe that he did not bet upon races. Even his stanch friend Frank Chylton was staggered; he naturally knew that Maurice had paid in two hundred pounds to his account, and in face of the charge brought against him there could be no doubt that this was a most suspicious circumstance; he was loyal to his friend as ever, but did think that out of consideration for those who were standing by him Maurice should be more prudent. Frank saw at once that the payment of this two hundred would be known to all the clerks in the bank, and, though his subordinates knew very well that keeping their mouths closed was rigorously exacted by their position, he had no doubt that with such a titillating piece of scandal flying about the town they would never be able to refrain from contributing their quota to it.

Maurice, in the meantime, pursued the even tenour of his way. He had laid out his windfall exactly as he had contemplated. Mr. Badger was profuse in his acknowledgments, and his tradesmen were all *chapeau bas*, and that balance at the bank was a comforting thing to think upon; but for all that he could not disguise from himself that a considerable portion of Tunnleton society gave him the cold shoulder. Their greetings were chilly, and he was apt to find himself left out of the delirious gaieties of that centre of the universe. One of his enemies there was who certainly retired from the fray sore discomfited. In an ill-advised moment General Maddox took upon himself to read this contumacious young man a lesson on manners.

I don't think the general ever forgot that fall, and, were he alive, I think, would even still give a slight shudder at hearing Maurice Enderby's name mentioned. It took place in the club, though not before witnesses. General Maddox was far too gentlemanly a man to have spoken as he did except in private.

"Mr. Enderby! er, er! you'll excuse my mentioning it, but when a lady of Mrs. Maddox's position takes the trouble to call upon Mrs. Enderby, with the kind view of tendering her some good advice, I really think she is entitled to be treated with civility and consideration."

Maurice's face hardened, and there was a dangerous glitter in his eye as he replied,

"Mrs. Maddox, sir, entered Mrs. Enderby's drawing-room apparently to malign her husband; she was ruder, as was also Mrs. Praun, than I had believed it possible that any lady could be. I have further to point out that my private affairs are no business of yours, and I will trouble you not to meddle with them for the future."

"Sir!" exclaimed General Maddox, "do you mean to insinuate——"

"I insinuate nothing," interposed Maurice quickly. "I have said what I meant to say, and am now going to lunch, and have the honour to wish you good morning."

As for General Maddox, he sank back in an arm-chair, gasping with indignation. His usual portly presence was in a state of collapse pitiable to witness; it was probably a quarter of a century since any one had presumed to tackle the pompous old general in this fashion.

"By Jupiter! I'll have him out," he muttered at last, ignoring for the moment that the duel was as obsolete in England as the tilt-yard, and that even in its most flourishing days the priest's cassock carried exemption. After a little he got up, and as he walked home said, "No! there is only one thing to do, hunt the fellow out of Tunnleton; and, by Jupiter! I'll do it."

The glorious July days rolled sunnily by, and the country around Tunnleton is in all its glory. The woods and fields are full of wild flowers, and the hedges thick with dog-roses and wild honeysuckle, the meadows alive with sturdy lambs, and the corn, though standing strong and green upon the ground, yet here and there begins to show slight indications of changing to a golden hue.

The parade is deserted, and nothing but the severe exigencies of shopping bring the fair ladies of Tunnleton to the High Street. The hum of insects is in the air, the very birds give vent to low querulous twitterings as if entering their protest about the state of the thermometer. The cattle stand languidly switching their tails till the aggressive army of flies proves too much for their patience, when they stampede in wild ungainly gallops round their pastures. Tunnleton lies at the bottom of a basin, and consequently the little air there is barely reaches it. The shopkeepers stand sweltering in their shirt-sleeves at their doors; no one would think of buying and selling, save from dire necessity, in such weather. The dogs lie upon the door-steps with their lolling tongues and panting sides, mutely appealing in their canine breasts

against the irony of dedicating such days peculiarly to them. It is one of those glorious old English summers such as are all but dim memories. 9

Tunnleton society has betaken itself to the open air. It is cricketing, lawn-tennis, picnicking, munching fruit and consuming claret-cup. There were perpetual open-air gatherings of one sort or another, and Maurice Enderby could not but see that from a great many of these his wife and himself were excluded; there could be no doubt of it; people who had called upon them in the first instance, and who had appeared anxious to make their acquaintance, now neglected to ask them to such entertainments as they might be giving. It did not require much penetration to see that there was a hostile influence at work, and that he had made implacable enemies of the two generals he felt no doubt. Of course, the rector, his friends the Chyltons, and some others welcomed him as cordially as of yore; but amongst the people who had not exactly dropped his acquaintance, but had apparently struck him off their invitation list, Maurice was a little surprised to find the Molecombes. Mr. Molecombe was the senior partner in Molecombe and Chylton's bank, and had, on Frank Chylton's representation, been one of the first people to call and offer civility to the Enderbys; however, of the cause of their defection he was destined to be speedily enlightened.

He was passing through the deserted High Street on one of those errands that formed part of his daily work, when he encountered one of the Miss Torkeslys; as before said, no one ever went out in Tunnleton without meeting a Torkesly.

"Good morning, Mr. Enderby," she exclaimed, with all the volubility characteristic of her race. "Have you heard the news?"

"No," replied Maurice, as he shook hands; "I was not aware that there was anything stirring—not even a breeze," he added, smiling.

"Oh yes, I assure you, Mr. Enderby, a marriage—a real marriage. And I suppose it will take place in the autumn. She is *such* a nice girl, and I am so fond of her. I am going up now to congratulate her. I am sure they must be pleased! A young good-looking husband with lots of money, what more could any one want? I don't believe she cares much about him, you know. And I should think she is a good deal older than he is, but it will do all very well, no doubt, and I am sure I am delighted. And, you know, it really was getting time dear Edith was settled."

"Excuse me, Miss Torkesly, but I really have no idea of whom you are speaking."

"No, I forgot you don't go about quite so much as you—I mean—that is, you gentlemen don't interest yourselves so much in marriages and engagements as we do."

"But won't you enlighten my ignorance?" replied Maurice.

"Of course, of course—you will be delighted to hear it, such

friends as they are of yours, and you so intimate with the Chyltons, and all!"

Maurice said nothing. He felt that this feminine windbag must have its way.

"Yes," continued the young lady, complacently; "Edith Molecombe has accepted Mr. Madingley, and, of course, the wedding will be a very grand affair when it does come off; and I do hope they will ask us to the breakfast. Good morning. I really have no time to stand gossiping," and with a gracious smile and bend of her head Miss Torkesly resumed her weary pilgrimage; for the Molecombes lived about a mile outside the town, and under that fierce midday sun the walk thither was really no small sacrifice at the altar of friendship.

"Yes," muttered Maurice, as he strolled on, "that would easily account for the Molecombes dropping me. I know Mr. Madingley has never forgiven me for putting him down, and, without knowing anything positive about it, I should guess he had the capacity of being what Dr. Johnson admired, '*a good hater*,'" and then Maurice thought later in the afternoon he would stroll up to the Chyltons and have a talk with them. So when the sun waxed low in the heavens, dropping like a ball of fire into his bed in the west, Maurice and his wife started for the Chyltons. They lived in a pretty villa standing in the middle of a large garden. To say grounds would be a misnomer, it was really nothing more than an extensive garden—well shrubbed, well treed, and tastefully laid out. Sitting under a horse-chestnut on the verge of the flower-gemmed lawn was Mrs. Chylton, a tea-equipage at her side, and her two children playing at her feet.

"I am so glad to see you, Bessie," she cried, as she rose to welcome the new-comer, "and you too, Mr. Enderby. How good of you to come up and lighten my solitude! I was suffering from a bad headache in the early part of the afternoon, and so gave up all thoughts of the Molecombes' garden-party. By the way, how is it that you are not there?"

"For the best of all possible reasons—we were not asked," rejoined Bessie.

Mrs. Chylton said nothing more, but she was a firm friend of the Enderbys, and resolved to take the earliest opportunity of favouring the Molecombe family with her opinion on the subject.

"I suppose you were very much astonished at the announcement of Edith's engagement?" said she.

"Well, yes; but, as I only know Mr. Madingley by sight, I was not likely to have any suspicion of what was coming."

"No," interposed Maurice, "and then, as you know, Mrs. Chylton, in consequence of my quarrel with Generals Maddox and Praun, a good many houses in the place are now closed to me."

"Yes, they no doubt have considerable influence in Tunnleton, and a certain number of people would be sure to take their side,

but after the shameful conduct of their wives I don't see, Mr. Enderby, that you could have done anything else."

"No, a man cannot allow his wife to be insulted. General Maddox further had the presumption to attempt to lecture me upon keeping my wife in order."

"What!" cried Laura Chylton.

"He had. That really was the gist of a conversation he thought proper to commence with me when we found ourselves left together the next day in the morning-room of the club, but I don't think he is likely to try his hand at that again," and then Maurice gave Mrs. Chylton an account of that interview.

Mrs. Chylton burst out laughing when Maurice described with a good deal of humour the conclusion of his passage of arms with the general.

"Oh, Mr. Enderby!" she cried; "did you really say that to him? He will never forgive you. I don't suppose his dignity has received such a shock for years; and General Maddox without his dignity is nothing. Frank must hear this—it will be nearly the death of him; he'll be home from the Molecombes about seven. If you can put up with cold lamb and salad for dinner, be good people and stop. It's not sermon night, Mr. Enderby, so you have no excuse."

"I shall be very glad indeed," said Maurice.

"Now that's neighbourly," replied Laura. "Smoke if you want to; you'll find the papers and magazines in Frank's room. Bessie and I are going to have a good long lazy gossip."

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHAT A BORE I'VE BEEN."

FRANK CHYLTON came home to dinner, and, as his wife prophesied, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks at Maurice's account of his skirmish with General Maddox.

"I don't blame you," he said; "old Maddox richly deserved it, but it isn't calculated to quench the ill-will with which he regards you. No, depend upon it, he and his immediate friends will make the very most of this trumped-up story, and they can, to some extent, make the place unpleasant to you, no doubt."

"We must endeavour to bear his enmity with what resignation we can. If his friendship is to be burdened with a right to administer advice on the part of Mrs. Maddox, I infinitely prefer to be without it—eh, Bessie?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Enderby, laughing merrily. "I am quite content to figure as the bad child who wouldn't take its powder in spite of all assurances that it was for its good. I suppose they were very full of Edith's engagement this afternoon?"

"Yes, it was a perfect *feu de joie* of congratulations. She looked happy and conscious, and Madingley more at his ease and less of a fool than a man usually does under the circumstances."

"Is Mr. Molecombe very pleased, Frank?" inquired his wife.

"Very, I should say—'Very satisfactory, good county family, heir to a nice property—yes, thank you, it will do, Chylton,' he replied, when I congratulated him. You know his short jerky manner of talking."

"Well, I suppose it is a good thing for her," rejoined Laura, "though personally I can't say I ever quite fancied Mr. Madingley—I can't tell you why, but it is so."

"I think I can, Mrs. Chylton, but pray put no particular stress upon my opinion, as I'll admit to being somewhat prejudiced against him. What you are conscious of is this—that Mr. Madingley is not quite a gentleman."

"You are right, Maurice," replied her husband. "He opened a very liberal account with us when he first came, and, as far as money is concerned, there is no reason to suppose but what he has plenty; but you're right, it crops out whenever you have much to do with him. Once get through the French polish, and you'll find an arrogant cad at the bottom of it."

"Come, Bessie," cried Laura Chylton, laughing; "when the gentlemen get so very pronounced in their opinions, it is best to leave them to themselves ere worse comes of it."

"Now, Maurice," said Frank, as soon as the ladies had left the room, "I've something on my mind concerning you. I hate mysteries and therefore I'm going to out with it at once. I don't want in the least to pry into your private affairs, but what induced you in the face of this scandal to pay £200 into our bank last week? Of course, Molecombe knows it, and forgive me if it sounds like an impertinence, it is a big sum for a man in your position to lodge to his account, and I need hardly say gives additional handle to the story of your having won money by horse-racing."

"Stupid of me!" exclaimed Maurice. "I wanted cash to draw against, to satisfy my tradespeople; I came unexpectedly into some money, and, never thinking of the construction you have put upon it, paid it into your bank."

Frank Chylton said nothing, but he looked uneasily at his companion. Maurice caught the glance, hesitated for a minute or two, and then said:

"You've been a staunch friend, Frank, and are entitled to know the whole story, and, providing you will give me your promise not to open your lips without my permission, I will tell it you."

Chylton readily gave the required promise, and then, without further preamble, Maurice related the story of Uncle John's eccentric wedding present, and what had come of it so far.

Frank listened attentively.

"I don't know anything about such things," he said, when

Maurice had finished, "but how it led you to take an interest in racing matters is very easy of comprehension. In that respect it has been perhaps an unfortunate gift, but, so far as I do understand things, from a money point of view, it is likely to be very profitable. This successful filly has only just started on her career, and will probably win several more valuable races before she has done. I have only one thing to say, don't think that I'm preaching, but for heaven's sake don't place reliance on big cheques like this tumbling in. That would sap the marrow of any man's character, and it is after all the hazard of two or three years. It's moral gambling, Maurice, and your uncle had better have written you a cheque for five hundred right off than made Mrs. Enderby such an ill-omened present. Forgive me, old man. What a bore I have been! Come and have a cigar on the lawn before you trot home."

It was a very pleasant hour that, in the garden, in the bright light of the full moon. Frank and Maurice strolled up and down enjoying their tobacco, and talking over their old boyish days, when Maurice used to come down to spend his Easter holidays at Tunnleton; while the ladies interchanged those confidences which it is seldom the sex has not at command. Ah, those boyish days! I am not quite sure whether we ever experience the same pure, unadulterated enjoyment afterwards. I am not talking of school-days, in which there was more to loathe than to like, but of those holiday times when we were permitted our own sweet will, and were up at daybreak to take up the night-lines. Then there were birds' nests and wasps' nests to be taken in the morning, countless occupations for the afternoon if our restless energies were not expended, and rabbits to be potted with the old single barrel we were allowed in the gloaming. That grim piece of irony, the holiday-task, did not exist in those days, or if it did was a little joke between master and boy, supposed to pacify parents in wet weather, when their progeny made themselves more objectionable than usual in consequence of enforced confinement, but never to be seriously alluded to on returning to school.

As they walked home Maurice said to his wife:

"I have had it clean out with Frank Chylton, Bessie, and told him the whole story. He a little staggered me; he seems to regard your uncle's as the gift of the wicked fairy, and is a little disposed to take your view of it."

"Oh, I hope not, Maurice. I own I was afraid at first it was leading you to take an interest in matters that would be destructive, to say nothing of disgraceful, to your professional career. But you have given that up, have you not?"

"Yes; but I'll admit the poison is hardly out of my blood. It is with great difficulty I abstain from the sporting papers, and in our own daily I never can resist the sporting intelligence. Is there inflammatory action in money that comes to one in this wise?"

On my word, I am half tempted to believe it. Bessie, Bessie, I am afraid this fatal present of Uncle John's will be the ruin of me!"

"Nonsense, Maurice dear, you're excited to-night, and taking too strained a view of things. I know I took the theoretical and high-toned view at first; but, oh, Maurice, when it comes to the practice, there is no denying there's a comfort in money that's not dishonestly come by. To walk into Rumford's shop now is so different to what it was a fortnight ago. Take Uncle John's present, as we should take it, as windfalls by no manner of means to be reckoned on. Don't trouble your head about the 'Wandering Nun,' and then, dear Maurice, no harm can come to you."

Poor Bessie! She spoke as a woman will speak, or, for the matter of that, men too, about a thing outside her experience; as if nine men out of ten, who have made a tolerable bet on the Derby or drawn a prominent favourite in a Derby sweep, do not, more or less, speculate upon what they will do with those imaginary winnings. They may deny it, but I know better, and have even had many invitations to dinners from sanguine backers, dinners which, sad to say for their sakes, were never celebrated.

When the Enderbys reached home they found a heap of letters on their table: of these, three only have anything to do with this story, but with these three it is necessary the reader should be acquainted; one was to Maurice, the others to his wife: we will take Mrs. Enderby's first.

"MY DEAR BESSIE,

"You and I are halves in the greatest flyer of the year. There will be another sugar-plum fall into our mouths, I think, at Goodwood, and perhaps something more later on, though you know racing is both, like life, uncertain and desperately wicked. You must forgive an old man, my dear; people were laxer in their ideas when I was young, and I am too old to change; I've done and do my duty conscientiously in my own way, but my ways, I know, are not in accordance with the times.

"What I am writing to you chiefly about is this. Can you put up with an old, somewhat irritable old man after Goodwood? I am ordered change and quiet, and though I have no business to be seen on a race-course, must go there to see my favourite run. Tunnleton suited me years ago, and the doctors tell me will now, and that the iron-water is just the tonic I require. They must say something, but of course what I do require is the hands of the clock put back a quarter of a century.

"Drop me a line to the Bedford, Covent Garden, and tell your husband he's not to fidget about wine; I am peculiar in that respect, and my own wine-merchant will send down what is good for me, or at all events what I take. If you can't take me in, get me comfortable lodgings near, and, upon second thoughts, perhaps

that would be best, though I should like to dine, &c., with you for the sake of your society. You have a baby, you know, and the most estimable babies will give vent to screams and wailings, which no bachelor, much less an old one, appreciates.

"Kind regards to your husband,

"Ever, dear Bessie,

"Your affectionate Uncle,

"JOHN MADINGLEY."

"We can't well take him in, Maurice. He will require a couple of rooms to make him thoroughly comfortable; besides, I should be on tenterhooks every time——"

"Baby lifted up his voice and wept," interposed Maurice, laughing, "and it is not to be supposed that young autocrat is going to change his habits to accommodate a great-uncle. No, no, Bessie, I'll get a comfortable bedroom and sitting-room at Bevan's close by. He can lunch, dine, and spend as much of the evening as he chooses with us, and will have his own rooms to retreat to whenever he wants to be quiet. It will all work very well, only, little woman, don't spare the table money while Uncle John's with us."

"Never fear," replied Bessie, merrily, "we will go in for riotous living, which will probably throw out his gout, and bring down a solemn anathema on your devoted head. Who is your other letter from?"

"This," said Bessie, as she tore it open, "is from the Bridge Court people. They really are very kind—read it——"

"DEAR MRS. ENDERBY,

"Will you both come and spend next week with us? Your husband's old friend Mr. Grafton has promised to pay us a visit, and I am sure will enjoy a talk over old days with him. Pray tell Mr. Enderby I can take no refusal. If his duties require his presence in Tunnleton, he can walk over after breakfast, and be out again easily in time for dinner. I guarantee that his days shall be at his own disposal if necessary.

"With kindest regards from both myself and the girls, believe me,

"Sincerely yours,

"LOUISA BALDERS."

"Bridge Court, Tuesday.

"P.S. Let us know when I am to send the carriage for you on Monday."

"It is very kind of them, and would be a very pleasant change, I should like it immensely, but I suppose it cannot be managed," said Bessie.

"Why not?" rejoined her husband.

"Well, you see, Uncle John is coming; it is impossible we can go away for a week under those circumstances."

"Nonsense! this is for next week; Uncle John is not coming until the week after Goodwood—three weeks hence. No, it will all fit in very well: write and say we shall be delighted to come; as Mrs. Balders said, I can easily walk over and do my work."

"But who is your letter from, Maurice?" replied Bessie.

"Oh, I had quite forgotten all about that. In the excitement produced by Uncle John's determination to visit Tunnleton, I might well forget everything else; you seem to forget that I have never seen this mysterious uncle, who, like the uncle of the old comedies or the beneficent genii of fairy tales, showers his gold upon us. My letter? why, it's from Bob Grafton; let's see what he has got to say."

"46, Half-Moon Street.

"DEAR MAURICE,

"No end of congratulations on the result of the Chesterfields. Mr. Brook, there is no doubt, possesses a real clinker in the 'Wandering Nun.' I remember a wily old racing man once said to me, 'There is no much better chance for a backer of horses than the getting knowledge of a good two-year-old and following it steadily all through the season.' Now that is exactly your position. You are following what I firmly believe to be the best two-year-old we have seen, with the additional advantage of not risking a shilling."

"I wish Mr. Grafton wouldn't write in that manner," interposed Bessie.

"Don't interrupt," rejoined her husband.]

"John Madingley's was an eccentric wedding present, but on my word it promises to turn out a very profitable one, and a very useful one, no doubt, in these early days of your career, when a few extra hundreds naturally come in handy. The Ham Stakes at Goodwood lie at her mercy, and I can't see what is to beat her in 'the Champagnes' at Doncaster, and to wind up with she has several engagements in the October meetings at Newmarket, though what she will be slipped for one can't tell at present. She is likely anyway to prove a veritable gold-mine to Messrs. Enderby and Brook. I was going to volunteer myself as a visitor for a night or two next week, but I have had a letter from Mrs. Balders asking me to Bridge Court, and assuring me that I should meet you both; so we will have our gossip there, and I will describe the 'Nun' to you. She takes after her sire, and gallops like a piece of machinery.

"Good-bye for the present. Trusting to see you next week, and with kind regards to Mrs. Enderby, believe me ever yours,

"ROBERT GRAFTON."

"I shall be very pleased to meet Mr. Grafton again," said

Bessie, "but Maurice, dear, don't be angry if I give one word of caution. I know you will have some racing talk with Mr. Grafton; but please don't talk about it in public. You know what a scandal is already raised here, and, though the Bridge Court people are not so particular, yet it is wonderful how things get round, and it really is calculated to do you harm in your profession."

Maurice made no reply. "Do him harm in his profession!" suddenly it flashed across him whether he had not made a mistake; whether he could ever be fitted for the high office he had taken on himself; or whether it would not be better to pause before seeking to be ordained priest.

CHAPTER XX.

BITTEN OF THE TARANTULA.

HAVING read the papers and pronounced his views on the political situation in those grave sonorous tones to which the club morning-room was so well accustomed, General Maddox shouldered his white umbrella and made his way home to luncheon. He saw as he entered his dining-room that Mrs. Maddox was evidently in what he termed a state of fuss.

"General," she exclaimed, "I have had one of the Torkesly girls here this morning, and you will hardly believe it when I tell you that, in spite of all that has passed, the Enderbys have actually gone to stay at Bridge Court."

"No, you don't mean it!" ejaculated the general, for once surprised out of his customary phlegmatic manner.

"Indeed, I do; Clara Torkesly saw it with her own eyes—saw them get into a Bridge Court carriage at their own door, and drive off with the boxes and portmanteaus outside."

"It is very odd what made the Balders take them up," said the general, meditatively.

"I presume you will think it your duty to interfere?" remarked the lady sharply.

"Me! interfere?" said the general; "why how can I interfere?"

"I presume you will write to Mr. Balders and explain to him that he is entertaining a gambling clergyman who ought to be unfrocked——"

"Nonsense! I haven't met Mr. Balders half-a-dozen times altogether, and our acquaintance is of the very slightest. I can't interfere about whom he may think proper to entertain at Bridge Court; but my opinion is unchanged about Mr. Enderby, and I shall certainly recommend all my friends in Tunnleton to keep clear of him."

"I contend, general, if you did your duty you would write to Mr. Balders at once."

"Then for once, my dear, I shall not do my duty. I am not going to run the risk of being snubbed for such uncalled for interference in an almost stranger's affairs as that would be. When I conceive I am entitled to speak I shall do so."

"And I tell you, general, you're not only entitled to speak now, but you're not doing duty by society if you do not," retorted Mrs. Maddox, with all the obstinacy and steady adherence to her point that a vindictive woman usually displays under such circumstances. Mrs. Maddox was quite conscious that she had had the worst of her skirmish with Mrs. Enderby. It was more bitter than the case of those who, seeking wool, come home shorn. She had gone forth to patronize and came back "snubbed." There was no other word for it; and when that happens to any of us, reprisals, if they cannot be made on the offender, must be made upon somebody else. Do not the veracious legends of the House of Ingoldsby remind us how a great warrior of the Louis Quatorze times

"Had just tickled the tail of Field-Marshal Turenne,
Since which the Field-Marshal's most pressing concern
Was to tickle some other chief's tail in his turn?"

Mrs. Maddox could not retaliate directly upon Bessie, but she could through her husband, and she meant to do so.

Before the general could reply the door opened and the manservant said, "Mr. Jarro is in the drawing-room, and says he is particularly anxious to see you, sir."

"Say I will be with him immediately, Williams. Now what can Jarro want? I should think he has come to admit that he can defend Mr. Enderby no longer."

When the general entered his drawing-room, he found Mr. Jarro distended with importance on the hearth-rug. Now the general was pompous in his manner, but if there was one man who, so to speak, "overflowed and drowned him" in this particular it was the rector of St. Mary's. The Reverend Jacob Jarro was continually, when upon his travels, mistaken for a high ecclesiastic in consequence of his extremely patronizing, condescending manner, and General Maddox had always an uncomfortable feeling of being defeated at his own game when thrown, as had happened more than once, into collision with the rector. There was nothing much in either man in reality. Both depended upon this imposing grandeur of manner—and that proving ineffective had nothing left but to retire from the fray discomfited. But the credulity of mankind is such that they were wont to be regarded as distinguished members of their respective professions, although their records afforded no grounds for such belief.

"Good morning, Mr. Jarro," said the general, as he entered the room. "Charmed to see you, as the servant told me you had

something particular to say. I am afraid I owe this visit more to business than sociability."

"Yes, general," returned the rector, "it is my duty as one of her principal sons in Tunnleton to repel all attacks made against the Church. Sir, you ventured to bring a charge against my curate which, had it been true, would have amounted in my eyes to immorality in a minor degree. I have inquired into that charge, and find it to be utterly false. I call upon you now to retract it, and to express regret that you should ever have permitted yourself to have made it.

The general drew himself up to his full height before he replied; then he said slowly, but firmly:

"I regret to say, Mr. Jarrow, that I can do nothing of the kind. What evidence have you of Mr. Enderby's innocence? Nothing, I presume, but his own word. The bare denial of the accused hardly holds good in a court of justice. I have sat upon court-martials in my time."

"The decision of which," interposed Mr. Jarrow, pompously, "I'm given to understand is usually in defiance of all evidence."

"You are speaking, Mr. Jarrow," said the general, flushing slightly, "of a court of which you have no knowledge. The accumulation of evidence against Mr. Enderby is very strong. He has been perpetually discussing racing for some time past. He takes an extraordinary interest in a particular race, shows a feverish interest to know the result of it, and whereas before that race he had been, I am told, in difficulties about money matters, he displays great command of that essential a few days afterwards, and finally lodges a good round sum to his credit at the bank."

"Then, General Maddox, I am to understand that you decline to withdraw the accusation you have made?"

"Certainly I do," replied the general, "until I am convinced it is unfounded."

"And that, sir," said Mr. Jarrow, swelling like an outraged turkey-cock, "you will speedily be convinced of in a court of law, if Enderby follows my advice. How you have picked up all this information about his private affairs I don't pretend to conjecture, but it displays a curiosity about your neighbours' affairs which I should hardly give you credit for taking. If Enderby follows my advice he will bring an action for libel against you. Good morning, General Maddox!" and Mr. Jarrow fumed out of the room.

The general felt not a little discomfited. He felt as unforgiving as ever towards Maurice Enderby, and moreover he still firmly believed that he was guilty of the charge preferred against him, and only aggravated his offence by solemnly denying it; but he was conscious that he had had considerably the worst of the argument with the rector. That taunt about prying into his neighbours' affairs had gone severely home to him. It was not the man's nature to do so, but the idle gossiping life of an inland

watering-place eats into the bones, gets into the blood. Life is so circumscribed that we take an unnatural interest in the doings of those around us. He did not much believe in any action for libel being brought against him, although he was fain to confess it would be "doosid" unpleasant if such a thing did take place. He could see already from the final taunt that Mr. Jarrow had thrown out that a sharp cross-examining barrister could at all events give him a very unpleasant half-hour in the witness-box.

At this juncture he was joined by his wife, and no sooner was that lady made acquainted with the object of Mr. Jarrow's visit than she at once proclaimed no surrender, and expressed her intention of nailing her colours to the mast.

"Mr. Jarrow, indeed! A pompous, meddling priest, who, upon the strength of having written some stupid bombastic letters in the local journals, believed himself a literary man and a great controversialist. Pooh! a fig for the Rev. Jacob Jarrow! He was always fussing about something! Let him fuss about this, and if Mr. Enderby was fool enough to listen to him he would see what good he got out of it. If Mr. Enderby chose to invite the public to inspect the quagmires of his career he could do so; wiser men boarded them over and kept silence about them."

Maurice and his wife, meanwhile, were thoroughly enjoying their stay at Bridge Court. The rector, with all his failings, was a good-natured man, and had conceived a real liking for his new curate, and, hearing where Maurice was going, he at once proposed to take a considerable portion of his, Maurice's, duties off his hands for that week, so that he was left pretty much his own master at Bridge Court.

Bessie thoroughly revelled in the complete freedom from all household affairs, and enjoyed the fruit, the lounging in the grounds, and the lawn-tennis. The Miss Balders, too, thoroughly frank, unaffected English girls, made a great deal of her, and she got on capitally with them, while, to Maurice, chatting over old times or things generally with his friend Bob Grafton was a quiet luxury which he fully appreciated.

"It's a rum start, old John Madingley's coming down to Tunnleton," said Grafton one evening in the smoking-room; "you've never met him, you say; well, it is good you should do so, and whoever recommended him to nurse his gout here did you a good turn."

"Yes; but there is one very singular thing about it. He writes to me to get lodgings for him close to my own house, and proposes to live with us. Now Richard Madingley, his heir, has taken a house in Tunnleton and entertains a good deal. He has a very nice house, and could have put his relation up without any trouble. Curious rather he didn't write to him, isn't it?"

"Yes; I never heard of Richard Madingley, and I never heard where John Madingley's money was likely to go; but though he's

a wonderful hale, hearty man for his seventy years, that last is a question that we shall probably have answered for us before long," said Bob, musingly; "so the fellow gives out that he is heir to Bingwell? He must have done, or the people here could never have arrived at such knowledge."

"Yes, it is owing to his own volunteered information on the subject that Tunnleton is aware of the fact. My wife never heard of him any more than you, but she owns to being very hazy about her cousins generally. She lost her father when she was young, and has never known much about his family, with the exception of Uncle John, the elder of the brothers."

Grafton looked up suddenly and said, although in careless tones:

"Does this new-comer know your wife is a Madingley?"

"I should think not; but, Bob, I want to speak to you about something else. I am afraid I have made a grave mistake in the profession I have selected. I begin to think I am not fitted for clerical life."

"Can't say I ever thought you were," rejoined Grafton sententiously, as he emitted a cloud of tobacco from under his moustache; "you ride too straight and are too fond of sport generally to sober down into a parson of these days. Forty or even thirty years ago you might have done, but you're too late, my boy."

"Why didn't you tell me so before?" said Maurice, somewhat bitterly.

"My dear fellow, what business had I to intrude such advice upon you? It is one of those things a man must think out for himself."

"I don't know what to do, but I think I shall throw it up."

"Well," said Bob, "you're not ordained priest as yet, and therefore you have plenty of time to think the matter over. Now I'm going to volunteer my advice. Your chance has come to you: think it seriously over, and when your mind is clearly made up unbosom yourself to John Madingley. He's in great spirits just now at the running of his pet filly, is evidently very kindly disposed to your wife, and, I should think, would be disposed to assist you in any career you may determine to embark on; only remember, make up your mind and know what you want him to help you in. You can't be such a fool as to think of the turf."

"No," rejoined Maurice; "I'll admit Uncle John's legacy has made me think much more about it than I ever did previously, and I, in my dismay upon finding how absorbed I was getting in its doings, on one occasion actually pictured myself as perpetrating that folly, but I need scarcely say that is by no means my view of 'a career.' I sometimes think Uncle John's wedding present has been a very dubious benefit."

Grafton looked at his friend for a few seconds with no little astonishment, and then, with a shrug of the shoulders, rejoined quietly:

"Well, it's a dubious benefit I only wish some one would confer upon *me*. My dear Maurice, don't build upon it, but without your bothering your head about it, your wife's eccentric present ought, in the course of this year and the next, if you have any luck, to be worth not hundreds, but some few thousands to you, a comfortable send-off in any new line you may strike out."

"You are right, old man," rejoined Maurice; "I shall follow your advice to the letter. I shall think well over what I am going to do, and put racing away from my mind as much as possible. By-the-way, I think you said the Ham Stakes at Goodwood was the next event the 'Wandering Nun' started for?"

A tremendous guffaw from Bob Grafton roused Maurice to a sense of the absurdity of the question on the top of his previous protestation. It was well the pair had the smoking-room to themselves that night, or the room would have rung with laughter.

"Hold me! hold me!" exclaimed Bob, as soon as he could control his merriment; "if ever there was a man badly bitten by the turf-tarantula, you are the party. Bless you, I can understand it, I have dabbled in it all my life; used to bet in saveloys and pounds of raisins when I was a small boy. The complaint's old and chronic with me, but you have got all the early and inflammatory symptoms."

"Nonsense, Bob. I'll admit being bewitched by the 'Nun.' I told you the present was a dubious benefit; but don't think I mean to carry my racing experiences further; however, after such a piece of inconsistency as I have just been guilty of, I don't think I can do better than be off to bed."

"Good night," rejoined Grafton; "if you think a laugh will do Mrs. Enderby good before going to sleep you had better recount that speech to her. I shall just finish my cigar and then follow your example."

"He is right about one thing," mused Grafton, as he smoked on after Maurice had left the room; "he is not fit for a parson, and what the deuce he is to turn his hand to I don't know. I fancy he would have made a good soldier, but I suppose the time has gone by for that; I'm afraid he is too old."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WIRE FROM GOODWOOD.

BUT the stereotyped parson's week came to an end, and the Saturday saw Maurice and his wife back in their little house at Tunnleton. Bob Grafton, in a spirit of sheer good nature, volunteered to telegraph in order to assuage that feverish curiosity which Maurice admitted feeling when he knew that Mr. Madingley's flying filly was to run.

"Now, don't you go fidgeting about; I shall be at Goodwood, and will send you a wire from the course. Don't you go into the club to look at the tissue, you shall have the news before they get it there, you bet. Good-bye, Mrs. Enderby, don't let your husband read sporting intelligence, and give him a dose of chloral whenever he manifests a proclivity to talk racing."

Bessie laughed as she stretched out her hand to say good-bye, but it was rather an anxious little laugh all the same, for she was seriously uneasy about this unfortunate interest which her husband took in the affair.

They were destined to have a speedy evidence of what Mr. Jarro's partizanship brought upon them. General Maddox, rather appalled by the fierce front displayed by the rector of St. Mary's, had strolled disconsolately off to confer with his great friend, General Praun, and that irascible warrior, who was as hot, not as an *Indian*, but as an *English* curry, at once took the fierce and furious view that might have been expected of him.

"Bring an action of libel! He should like to see Jarro bring one! he should like to see Enderby bring one! upon the whole it would seem that he preferred all Tunnton should bring actions for libel! He would teach them he was not to be bullied. He had met traders in India under the guise of missionaries, and had never failed to denounce them. He had met a betting man in Tunnton under the guise of a parson, and he *had* denounced him. He had never been afraid of doing his duty, and wasn't going to flinch from doing it now. Let them bring their actions for libel! let them put him in the box and listen to what he had to tell them; Messrs. Jarro and Enderby would be very sorry in half an hour that they had invited his revelations!"

A great man Praun no doubt; had gone through life under this delusion, and been accepted as such by numbers of his acquaintance, chiefly on account of an irritable temper and natural combativeness. But he was no judge of what constituted evidence, and what he termed his revelations would have been pronounced mere hearsay and gossip and no evidence at all by a court of law.

Now the next week was Goodwood, and, do what he would, Maurice could not abstain from further glances at the sporting intelligence in his own daily paper. It is useless to rail against the infirmity of human nature, but it is scarce in accordance with our common frailty not to manifest curiosity of what may be the result of a lottery or raffle in which we have taken tickets. Still Maurice manfully refrained from entering the club, or throwing himself in the way of its sporting frequenters. He contented himself with slowly gathering the news of the Goodwood doings in his paper next morning; but on the Wednesday afternoon came an end to this. Between four and five a boy arrived with the yellow tissue, and it need scarcely be said that a Miss Torkesly

happened to be passing and witnessed its delivery. The telegram was of the briefest; it was simply this:

"Congratulations! The 'Wandering Nun' won easily by a length.—R. GRAFTON, Goodwood Racecourse."

A thrill of exultation ran through Maurice's veins. It is no use disputing it! To nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand the acquisition of money is inspiring, let their profession be what it may. Maurice did not know exactly what the winning of the Ham Stakes meant, but he had little doubt that it represented two or three hundred to his credit at his banker's.

He sat with the telegram in his hand, musing over several little things in the way of furnishing that Bessie wanted. He thought also of that pony-carriage of which they had indulged in hazy dreams—a pony-carriage with its *et ceteras* that they had pictured as coming within their reach, when editors should at length awaken to a proper sense of the value of his—Maurice's—contributions; and here was this money coming in without his lifting a finger (so he admitted with a half-sense of shame) to earn it. Granting he was a popular contributor, Maurice could not but think how many articles he must need write, how many weary hours he must need pass at his writing-table, before he could hope to make that sum of money! It was demoralizing—he knew it was. He was conscious that, despite all his struggles to the contrary, he was becoming to all intents and purposes a gambler. He did not *actually* play, he did not *actually* bet; but, for all that, he was watching the racing reports as men do the spinning of the ball or the fall of the card at Monte Carlo. However, he soon shook off his reverie; none of us wax solemn for long over the winning of money, more especially won from neither friend nor acquaintance, and it was with quite a gay countenance that he left his study and ascended to his wife's drawing-room.

"Well, Bessie," he exclaimed, "I have just had a telegram from Grafton to say that your uncle's filly is victorious again. I really am glad that he is coming to us next week. He cannot surely mean to keep on presenting us with hundreds. When he good-naturedly said that you were to go halves with him in what the 'Nun' might win, he probably thought she might pick up one decent stake, but could hardly have supposed that he was the owner of the very best two-year-old of the season—a filly whose winnings are likely to be computed by thousands."

"No, no," rejoined Bessie, "I agree with you, I don't think that could have been his intention; but Uncle John is a man of his word, and sure to stick to it. Still his coming here will give you an excellent opportunity to release him for what he has already done; and tell him we really expect to participate no further in the 'Wandering Nun's' successes."

"You are quite right; I have got a capital first floor for him just over the way, and as soon as he has settled down I'll explain

this to him. He has been very loyal to his promise; many men would have considered a cheque for a hundred quite sufficient redemption of such a pledge."

"He has been very good to us, Maurice. I am no purist, as you know, but Uncle John's present to some extent represents dabbling in the turf. I know, dear, you don't actually, but morally it is otherwise. We will thank Uncle John and have done with it."

Maurice stirred his tea and quietly assented to his wife's proposition. He meant it thoroughly; he wished to disentangle himself from the meshes of the turf; but the abandoning that fascination, except under compulsion, requires rigid resolution, as many a moth who has scorched his wings past redemption at the fatal candle has sadly owned through many succeeding years of exile or poverty. To Maurice it was so easy to continue his interest in it; he could always calm his conscience with the assurance that he never actually staked money on the result, but the excitement of watching what to him was really speculation on its chances was one he would be somewhat loth to forego when it came to the point.

Mr. Richard Madingley had given a great garden-party, which was followed up by a dance in honour of his engagement. The greater part of Tunntleton society was present at this *fête*, and the Enderby scandal, as it had come to be called, was a prominent topic of discussion. The adverse party were much in the ascendant, indeed Maurice could count few friends in that assembly, but he had one powerful one in the person of the Reverend Jacob Jarrow, who had no idea of a curate of his being found fault with by any one but himself.

Mr. Jarrow was a person formidable to combat; his very failings tended to make him an awkward antagonist; his pomposity, self-complacency, and obstinacy were hard to contend with. You can't convince a man who starts with a steady determination that he will not be convinced; ridicule he was impervious to, and in the matter of words, both ponderous and voluminous; you could no more have talked the Reverend Mr. Jarrow down than his church-steeple.

General Maddox, after his last week's experience, kept clear of him, but the irascible Praun could not refrain from dashing in to rescue his wife from a pretty sharp lecture on want of charity towards her neighbours, which, without exactly mentioning Maurice's name, evidently had his story for its text.

"It's all very well, Mr. Jarrow—we all know that you consider a curate of yours can do no wrong—that you decline even to listen to the evidence against him; but you can hardly expect that the unsupported word of the rector of St. Mary's will whitewash Mr. Enderby in the eyes of men of the world. I'm told that you counsel him to bring an action for libel against some of us; I can only say, let him, let him, sir, as far as I am personally concerned;

he will find that more complete exposure is all he will take by that move!"

"I have not only counselled him to do so, but I shall urge him still more strongly to persist in such resolution. People who calumniate their fellow-creatures find themselves mulcted in serious damages in these days; you will perhaps discover, general, that mere statement doesn't constitute evidence;" and with this the rector walked away, with the air of a man who has completely crushed his opponent, most maddening to witness.

"Evidence, forsooth!" exclaimed the enraged general to his wife; "the idea of any parson telling *me*, a man that has sat on hundreds of court-martials, that I don't know what evidence is!" and then the general walked off, fuming and muttering, I am afraid, words not altogether complimentary to the clerical profession generally; but he was soon destined to receive consolation, and, ere he had gone far, he came across his host, who was being excitedly appealed to by some of his fair guests on the subject of Maurice's iniquities.

"You see, you know all about these things, Mr. Madingley; you oughtn't to, and of course you'll give it up when you're married; but you really should be a judge of whether Mr. Enderby really is guilty of gambling."

Dick Madingley, who was by nature relentless in his vengeance, had steadily adhered to his rôle of Iago. He had nothing to say to it; he knew nothing about it; it was no affair of his, but, if you asked him as a man of the world—well, Mr. Enderby had endeavoured to make the most of his information.

"Ah, I am afraid so. It is very sad that a clergyman should give way to such madness," observed Angelina Torkesly, with a deep sigh; "but after what I saw yesterday I am afraid there can be no doubt that Mr. Enderby has yielded to temptation."

And then the fair Angelina, in all the glory of contributing a fresh sauce to the highly-spiced dish of gossip they were discussing, narrated her story of the yellow envelope and the telegraph boy.

Dick Madingley said nothing, but in the eyes of the audience this evidently was an important fact that admitted of no rebutting, and they were expressing their opinion to that effect freely when an unctuous voice boomed upon their ears.

"I would recommend you to be a little more reticent of your opinions, my good people. This accusation is about to become the subject of an action for libel, in which one or two of the leading personages of Tunnleton will figure prominently, and several more have the privilege of entering the witness-box."

A sudden shower could not have more effectually washed out the conversation than the rector's announcement. It was the first society had heard of such a thing as an action for libel being contemplated, and society had a hazy idea of the pains and penalties connected with that style of prosecution; but Tunnleton was prompt to recognize that it was a very unpleasant affair to be

mixed up in. The Reverend Jacob Jarrow had taken up the cudgels with such good will for his curate, that he had quite persuaded himself that this action should be and would be brought, although Maurice had never for one moment hinted at such a course. However, his speech had the effect of dispersing the little knot, and Mr. Jarrow found himself left face to face with his host and with General Praun as the sole auditor of what might pass between them.

"It is very good of you to stand up for your curate, Mr. Jarrow," remarked Dick Madingley, suavely, "but, if you have any influence with him, you had best counsel him to drop this action for libel. He is no friend of mine, or you would see him here to-day, but I don't like to see a man make a fool of himself. I'm the last fellow to find fault with any one for having sporting tastes, but if a man does have a little flutter over a race it's no use telling lies about it. I don't pretend to be a censor of morals at my time of life, but, Mr. Jarrow, if it is wrong for a parson to bet, I can't see that he mends things by denying his having done so."

"You had better be very careful how you reiterate that calumny," said Mr. Jarrow, pompously.

"Had I?" replied Dick Madingley, with an evil gleam in his light blue eyes. "Good! next time you see your model assistant, just ask him this question: Did the telegraph bring you good news from Goodwood on Wednesday?"

"Good gracious, what do mean?" exclaimed Mr. Jarrow.

"Nothing more than I say. Simply ask Mr. Enderby if the telegraph brought him good news from Goodwood on Wednesday. If his answer satisfies you I am willing to retract my recently expressed opinion."

It was a bold *coup* on Richard Madingley's part, for telegrams refer to many other things than racing, and Dick had no idea of what Enderby's telegraph was about really. Still he knew that it was the Goodwood week, and had managed to wring from the telegraph clerk, with whom he was on intimate terms, that it did come from the ducal gathering.

As for the Reverend Mr. Jarrow, he was fairly taken aback, and left, to use nautical parlance, "in irons," and ere he could recover himself his host was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

JOHN MADINGLEY.

EARLY in the following week John Madingley arrived in Tunnleton. There had been no flourish of trumpets announcing his arrival, the Enderbys had mentioned it to no one, and the

quiet, countrified, old-fashioned clergyman who stepped into the very well-known lodgings that Maurice had secured for him attracted no attention in the first instance. But in a few days Tunnleton awoke to the fact that Mrs. Enderby had got an uncle who had arrived within its gates, and that the name of that uncle was Madingley, and then the gossiping little town literally ran wild with boundless conjecture. What relation was the new-comer to Mr. Richard? How extremely odd, if he was a relation, that Mr. Richard had never alluded to his expected arrival, and then Tunnleton remembered that Richard Madingley had run up to town, on some lawyer's business it was said, and presumably connected with the marriage settlement.

Tunnleton felt mystified, and if there is one thing a provincial town invariably resents and places the worst construction on it is this. An uncle of Mrs. Enderby! then why did the Enderbys keep his approaching advent a secret? Mr. Enderby's ways apparently, like those of "the Heathen Chinee," were peculiar, and once more society shook its head over Maurice's iniquities and came to the conclusion that, as far as Richard Madingley was concerned, despite the uncommonness of the name, they were namesakes but not relatives.

However, there were two people in Tunnleton who did not accept this view of things. Mr. Molecombe the banker, whose daughter was betrothed to Dick Madingley, thought it behoved him to call at all events on one who might prove to be a somewhat important relative of his future son-in-law, and, to say the truth, was not quite so well satisfied in the matter of settlements as a staid business-man should be before he surrendered his daughter to a comparative stranger. Mr. Molecombe came to the grave resolution that he would call. He had sounded his junior partner Frank Chylton pretty severely on this point, but Frank was so indignant at the omission of the Enderbys from the Molecombe garden-party of some few weeks ago, that he steadfastly withheld the information he possessed, and there was growing up gradually in Frank Chylton's mind a doubt as to whether Richard Madingley was quite what he professed to be. He had never even hinted such a thing to Maurice, but it struck him as curious that Richard Madingley seemed quite unaware that Mrs. Enderby's maiden name had been identical with his own, and that she was a niece of the man whose property he professed himself heir to. It had occurred to him of late that Mr. Richard Madingley was perhaps drawing on his imagination when he described himself as heir to that Yorkshire property, and that the succession to it might be more matter of hope than a declared intention on the part of the present proprietor.

The Reverend John Madingley of Bingwell might be a pronounced fact in his own county and in many other places, but in Tunnleton he had been a mere impalpable shadow in which they

took no sort of interest till the arrival of his reputed heir, and even then that Mrs. Enderby was also a relation of the Yorkshire squire and rector had been quite forgotten by the few people who had known it, with the exception of the Chyltons.

Mr. Molecombe in due course presented himself at John Madingley's lodgings, and, in response to the conventional "not at home," desired to see that gentleman's valet, and explained to him that he did not come within the catalogue of ordinary visitors, as his daughter was engaged to be married to Mr. Richard Madingley.

The valet's face was immovable, and his manner most deferential as he listened to the banker's story, but he firmly though politely reiterated that his orders were imperative, that his master was in delicate health, and regretted that he was unable to receive visitors.

Mr. Molecombe retired considerably disappointed. He thought, considering the circumstances, the rector of Bingwell might have made an effort to see him.

There is a great resemblance between humanity and sheep. Despite their first impressions, no sooner was Tunnleton aware that Mr. Molecombe had called, than it occurred to several of the prominent members of Tunnleton society, who had profited by Richard Madingley's hospitality, that it would be perhaps advisable to call upon the new-comer. Mr. Molecombe had, of course, satisfied himself of the relationship before committing himself in this wise. But the same answer was invariably returned which had met the banker on his visit: "Delicate health, and deeply regretted he was unable to receive visitors."

Not reckoning the Enderbys, John Madingley made but one exception to this rule, and that, to the unfeigned astonishment of Tunnleton, was General Shrewster. That he was a self-contained man, and not given to slopping over like a full pail when jogged against, his acquaintance were aware. Still it is very odd that he had never mentioned his acquaintance with the master of Bingwell, whom he must evidently know intimately or he would scarcely have been admitted when he called.

It was quite true, General Shrewster, although near a score of years younger than John Madingley, had been a contemporary of his upon the turf. It was many a year ago since the general had abandoned that fascinating pursuit, but there were plenty of old racegoers even now who could recollect how Captain Shrewster used to "shake the ring;" how he would dash in at the last moment, in the days when men really did bet, and write down three or four pages of his betting-book in about the same time as it has taken the writer to scrawl this paragraph. "It's a treat," an old trainer once remarked, "to put the captain on a good thing, he's the pluckiest bettor I ever saw; and when he goes in, he fairly makes the ring dazed before he snaps his betting-book to again. He has had

them so often and so heavily, they are a bit cowed now when he puts down the pieces in earnest."

Yes; General Shrewster's had been the fate of many another who had started in life with a good property and plenty of ready money. How many thousands he had run through on the turf was a matter only known to his bankers and his solicitor. The large sums that he won by day on the heath were more than swallowed up by the reckless play he indulged in, at the rooms at Newmarket, at night. He had wonderful information, and was a most successful speculator, but reckless after-dinner play at the gaming table would easily dissipate such successes, and the gambling houses of Brighton or the rooms at Doncaster easily swallowed up the winnings of the ducal gathering or successful days on the Town Moor.

It was in those early days that John Madingley had known young Shrewster. It is hardly worth going into, but in those days the then captain had intimate relations with the great Northern stable in which John Madingley trained, and the rector had been attracted towards him from the audacity with which he was wont to back any promising horse of his. They had become great friends; Shrewster had more than once been down to stay at Bingwell. Then came his smash. He had nothing for it but to exchange to India and leave the settlement of his affairs to his solicitor. The result was, a fine fortune became a moderate competence; still upon that and his pension General Shrewster as a bachelor was passing rich in Tunnleton. He never spoke of his past, and that complacent little place, which believed that its knowledge was universal, was quite unaware that the grey-haired veteran, who read the morning papers so placidly, who was never seen in the billiard-room, and rarely even as a looker-on in the card-room, was the Captain Shrewster about whose wondrous turf successes and mad doings all London had rung a quarter of a century ago. You may think yourself a big man, you may flatter yourself that you have made your mark, but to bring yourself to a proper sense of the nothingness of all human ambition there is nothing like a visit to one of those pulseless provincial places. Except you are royalty or the prime minister, there will be slight curiosity regarding you. Swinburne, Wilkie Collins, or Millais run no risk of being mobbed in such towns.

It was not long before Tunnleton arrived at the fact that General Shrewster was admitted by the recluse of Bevan's, as the somewhat ostentatious private hotel where Mr. Madingley had taken up his abode was called, and about this the inquisitive little town marvelled much.

Not an easy man to question, this General Shrewster; could be curt and sarcastic, as more than one social dignitary had discovered, somewhat to his discomfiture. Still, Generals Maddox and Praun, after some talk between themselves, came to the con-

clusion that Mr. Madingley's eccentric seclusion was a thing to be inquired into, and that the information they sought could only be obtained from General Shrewster. But from this latter the two *gobe-mouches* could extract nothing. General Shrewster told them briefly that he had known John Madingley intimately many years ago, that he had come down to Tunnleton for his health, and was not equal to receiving visitors or making fresh acquaintances.

Even General Praun admitted there was no more to be said; it certainly was open to a man to choose whom he would receive in his own house. Still, as the uncle of Dick Madingley, Tunnleton, he did think, had claims, &c., &c., which only went to prove that "there was no more to be said" by no means, as a rule, closed discussion, there being generally plenty more of inaccurate talk to follow that brief announcement.

Maurice and his wife got on capitally with Uncle John. He looked more like an old-fashioned country squire than a clergyman, although his dress was sober enough. He was generally attired in a single-breasted pepper-and-salt coat of slightly sporting cut, drab kerseymere breeches and leggings, and invariably wore a white scarf of matchless fold and immaculate purity. He was evidently fond of Bessie, and no sooner did he discover the fascination the turf had for her husband than he unfolded the lore of past decades for his edification, and about the last fifty years of turf history John Madingley was a combination of racing calendar and biographical dictionary very interesting to listen to for any one whose tastes lay that way. One thing Maurice remarked as strange was that he made no allusion to Richard Madingley, and at first seemed a little taken aback to find that he was established in Tunnleton; afterwards he appeared to have heard all about it, but to take very little interest in Richard or his proceedings.

The following conversation would have created no little excitement in Tunnleton could it have been heard:

"Good morning, Shrewster! It's very good of you to come and cheer up an old friend who has got very near to the end of his tether. I like a gossip with you over the old times of five-and-twenty years ago."

"Yes, Madingley, but it's ended the same way with the lot of us. We plunged and won! We plunged and lost! and the losings always exceeded the winnings by many thousands. My lot was only that of a score of others; you can recollect. You, like a sensible man, raced solely for sport, and when you did bet it was to an extent that never caused you a moment's uneasiness. However, never mind these bygones. I am glad you like young Enderby. He's a good sort."

"Yes, he is!" returned John Madingley. "He is a very good young fellow; but I tell you what, he is in the wrong groove. That chap will never do any good as a parson. They don't stand

parsons of my stamp now-a-days, and Maurice is no more fitted for the profession he has chosen than I am, though all the same I have been more conscientious than the world gives me credit for."

"You are quite right," rejoined Shrewster. "Enderby would make a rattling good dragoon, but he will never do any good in his present vocation."

"Well," interposed Mr. Madingley quickly, "he is not committed to it yet, and he is young enough to change, and I shouldn't mind helping him a little in some other line if he liked."

"And what would your heir say to that?" inquired General Shrewster slyly.

John Madingley threw himself back in his chair, and burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ah," he said at length, "what a commotion there will be in Tunnleton when they come to the rights of that story; in the course of a few days Scotland Yard will no doubt have reckoned this gentleman up for us; but, as I told you before, as for his being my heir, why I never even heard of the fellow before. He may have a right to the name of Madingley, but he is most assuredly no connection of mine. You tell me he is engaged to a girl in this town, a daughter of that banker fellow who called upon me. I don't mean to see him, but I shall certainly before I leave Tunnleton let him know that his intended son-in-law is flying false colours. But in the meanwhile, Shrewster, not a word to any one. I know I can trust you."

"Yes, I know how to keep my tongue between my teeth, and now I'm going to say good-bye. You look tired, and will be all the better for a snooze before dinner. Good-bye." And with a warm pressure of the hand the two old friends separated.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT THE "BRISTOL" RESTAURANT.

If there was one man at Tunnleton who felt uncomfortable about the position of things it was Mr. Molecombe. His daughter had heard several times from her *fiancé*, but Richard Madingley always wound up by regretting that the well-known dilatory ways of solicitors still detained him in town. That was nothing compared to a rebuff he had received from John Madingley. Not content with that gentleman's "not at home," he had thought fit to write to him to explain Richard Madingley's relation to his daughter, and the rector of Bingwell's reply had thrown the banker into a cold perspiration. John Madingley had curtly answered that his health precluded his receiving visitors, and that he

had nothing to say to Richard Madingley's matrimonial arrangements.

A more uncomfortable answer it was scarce possible to get from a man who stood *in loco parentis* to that of a proposed son-in-law. A second letter elicited no answer whatever, and, though Mr. Molecombe as yet kept his own counsel, he was nevertheless seriously discomposed about the aspect of affairs. It was a puzzle beyond his comprehension. His intended son-in-law had vanished from Tunnleton simultaneously with the advent of the relative from whom he professed to expect his heritage; that might have been accident, but it was singular that he should not return nor apparently have been aware of the Yorkshire rector's coming. Then, again, John Madingley's note, and the ground he had apparently taken up, were by no means reassuring. Elderly gentlemen invariably expected to be consulted and deferred to about their heirs' matrimonial intentions, more especially when such elderly gentlemen's property was entirely at their own disposal. Mr. Madingley apparently did not. One solution only of this was possible to the banker's mind, namely, that the rector of Bingwell most thoroughly disapproved of the whole affair and intended to countenance it as little as might be. This would account for Dick Madingley's apparent embarrassment about the settlements. There were difficulties probably between himself and his uncle's lawyers, for, despite the fact that Richard Madingley had only given himself out as a cousin of the well-known Yorkshire "Squarson," Tunnleton, from the moment they had grasped the fact (rather late in the day) that the owner of Bingwell was to some extent a man of moneyed notability, had insisted on that relationship, and their disgust when this clergyman of the north declined to appear and be worshipped was considerable. Still, let Tunnleton think what it liked, there were two points which there was no getting over. The Reverend John Madingley adhered strictly to his determination to see nobody—while, curiously enough, his relative and heir was apparently unable to return from London. Mr. Molecombe was much too prudent to show any concern about this, but at the same time both he and his family felt extremely uncomfortable about the turn things had taken. Edith Molecombe, indeed, shrank as far as possible from receiving visitors of any sort. She could say with truth that she heard nearly every other day from her *fiancé*—that his letters were dated from the Bristol Hotel, but that he was still detained in London by those bothering lawyers; all very well this on the surface, but Mr. Molecombe could not but see that within such easy distance from town as Tunnleton was it was very possible for an enamoured young man to run down for a day or so to see his sweetheart, more especially when such an opportunity of presenting his bride-elect to the man who stood to him in place of a father had occurred. It would almost seem as if John

Madingley had run down to Tunnleton for that express purpose, and yet Richard seemed to have disappeared as if to controvert it.

Could Mr. Molecombe have looked in at the Bristol Restaurant one evening, his eyes might not only have been opened, but have been fetched pretty nearly out of his head. Trifling over his dessert with a still unfinished bottle of dry champagne at his right hand, was a slight, wiry, dark-faced, clean-shaven man, allowing himself only the smallest modicum of mutton-chop whisker. A man about whose age it was hopeless to conjecture. He might be either prematurely old or extraordinarily young for his time of life, but he was at all events eating the best hot-house peaches and drinking the best *brut* brand the "Bristol" could furnish, with a *nonchalance* that betokened the most perfect indifference to the amount of his dinner-bill. While he was leisurely picking his teeth, a man clothed in faultless evening attire, with immaculate white tie, who had been apparently so far condescendingly superintending the other waiters, approached his table with a deferential bow and said:

"I hope, Mr. Pick, I hope your dinner has been satisfactory."

"Hallo, Dick! thought you had made your pile and started something of this kind on your own account."

"Well, Mr. Pick, I did get a tidy lot together, and I undoubtedly had a very good time last year, still I did not think it quite good enough to cut this place; my berth here, as you know, is an exceedingly good one; they are excessively liberal in the matter of leave, in fact really three days a week is as much supervision as they demand from me. I have been in the country a bit for the benefit of my health."

Mr. Pick received this statement with a low whistle and a closure of the left eye that might have been deemed almost insulting by sensitive people.

Richard Madingley continued in the same unmoved tone:

"Things haven't been quite so rosy this season so far; you have always been very good to me, Mr. Pick, and I thought I could rely upon you thoroughly for information about the North Country stables."

"So you can, Dick, you have always known all I know."

"What about this 'Wandering Nun,' then? You never gave me a hint about *her*, Mr. Pick."

"No," replied the saturnine gentleman irritably. "Dash it, how could I? Those cursed Kilburnes kept the thing so soundly dark that there wasn't a soul in the north knew anything about her except perhaps old Madingley and one or two of his cronies. They never let you know, and old Kilburne and his son think a deal before they lay out a pony between 'em, but they have got a flyer, no mistake about it. I have learnt it much

too late to collar the loaf; but you had better follow my lead and go in for the crumbs."

"My expenses have been very heavy this season, Mr. Pick."

"Your expenses!" retorted the other contemptuously, "your expenses be damned! Look here, Dick Bushman: I promised your mother to give you a hand, as far as I could, before she died, and I've done it. I'm not particular. No man who makes the turf his vocation can afford to be mealy-mouthed, but you certainly have no call to heave rocks at me. I got you your appointment here, better than that of most clerks in government offices as far as money and work go: I've given you the office whenever I've been in the swim myself, and you come here whining to me about your expenses and not being advertised of the 'Wandering Nun.' D——n it, sir, live on the two pounds a week you will probably command if they turn you off here without a character, and don't trouble me any more!"

"Pray don't mistake me, Mr. Pick. If you would allow me to conduct you to a private room while I explain, and condescend to accept a glass of champagne and a cigar from me, you will be quite satisfied."

"Well, Dick, I could do another pint of 'pop' and a tidy cigar. You ain't a fool, and if you don't rough me up the wrong way I'm good to stand to you still, but that 'Wandering Nun' is a devilish sore subject; there hasn't been such a good thing as that come out of Yorkshire in my time without my knowing all about it: but the Kilburnes, having no real speculators connected with them, had no trouble about keeping this dark; a few hundreds would represent the investments of Mr. Brooks, his friends and his trainer. But come along and you shall tell me what you've been doing."

Mr. Pick, now a notable member of the ring, had begun life as a footman. The antecedents of the knights of the pencil are mysterious as those of the members of the Stock Exchange; they have their ascension, culmination, and decline, their zenith and their nadir; comet-like they cross the sky and disappear into the obscurity of poverty or sparkle with the temporary effulgence of wealth. Mr. Pick at present gravitated between these points, but he was a philosopher, and, when he could not afford the tariff of the "Bristol," was content with a cut off the joint at a luncheon-bar, though, like most of his vocation, he always lived luxuriously when in feather.

Dick led the way to a snug, disengaged dining-room, in which one of his subordinates was already busy manipulating the cork of a champagne bottle.

"Well, I haven't seen much of you lately," remarked Mr. Pick, as he sipped his wine with infinite gusto; "what have you been doing?"

"I've been doing the swell and setting up as a gentle-

man of property: never mind where, but not very far from town."

"Yes, you're good at that game, as I know from experience; you can do the pretty and put the side on, Dick, so as to pass for the real article, unless the liquor gets the best of you, and then, like the rest of us, you are apt to display the weaknesses of your past; you've a command of strong language which you're a little disposed to make use of when you're sprung—that's injudicious. Well, did you have a good time? Did you make it pay?"

"Not quite: but if I could raise a few hundreds more I should have made a good thing of it. I was fairly established as one of the swells of the place and engaged to the daughter of the leading banker there."

"What, you, to a real lady, with money?"

"Just so," rejoined Dick rather sharply; "there's nothing very wonderful in that; I'm not bad-looking, you know; they all think that I'm comfortably off and that I'm a gentleman."

The other ejected a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and then, with a significant wink, observed:

"Right you are; a real out-and-outer; but you've a past, Master Dick, that respectable people would look upon as somewhat dubious."

"When the respectable people don't know it that matters little," replied Dick Madingley; "but I wanted to see you, and that is the principal reason that brought me to London."

"Campaign not been profitable as yet, eh?" rejoined Mr. Pick.

"No, but just on the point of becoming so."

"Like 'em all, like 'em all," replied the bookmaker softly. "Like myself, like the beggars who are always on the verge of discovering how to make gold or diamonds, or their fortune. We're always pounded for that other five hundred pounds or so. If we had had that odd hundred or so to plunge with, what a lot of us would be driving in carriages instead of wearing our soles out. The end of your moving history is, you want money and can I find it?"

Dick nodded. He knew his man, and, though Mr. Pick might philosophize himself, words were quite wasted upon him as a matter of business. He would never have attained the very tolerable turf position he held had he not been both hard-headed and practical. The advancing of a little money where he saw his way to tolerable security, for exorbitant interest, was quite within his province.

"You know I have been doing tolerably well, or you wouldn't see me here; but you also know I'm the last man to go into a speculation blindfold. You'll have to show your hand, my boy."

"And that is none so easy to do. You would want to know what the young lady's fortune was to be."

"Naturally. I've to recover my money and be liberally recompensed for the accommodation," rejoined Mr. Pick gravely.

"That's just the rub. My proposed father-in-law is somewhat anxious to do the same thing with regard to myself."

The bookmaker gave vent to a low whistle.

"Under those circumstances," he said, at last, "I think I may say this match won't come off. At all events, it don't sound good enough for this child to risk money on."

"It will come off fast enough if I am not stranded for a few hundreds of ready coin. They all believe down there I'm of a good Yorkshire family, and heir to a nice property."

"A rather credulous population down there, wherever it is," remarked Mr. Pick, with a sneer. "And now, before we go any further, where is it?"

"Time enough for you to know when you tell me you're good to advance me four or five hundred to carry on the war."

"It is no use, Dick; when those Parliament swells come to the House for supplies, they have to condescend to particulars, and so will you before I part with a 'mag.'"

"I must have the money or chuck the thing up," replied Dick Madingley. "You would have to know it sooner or later, and as I can't well play the game without a confederate, perhaps the sooner I take you into my confidence the better. I am down at Tunnleton, and living in one of the best bachelor residences in the town."

"I say, isn't that risky? Weren't you afraid of being spotted?"

"No, the 'Bristol' is a little above Tunnleton form, and, as for racing, well, Tunnleton talks a good deal about it, but, bar Epsom, don't know its way to a race-course."

"Any crumbs to be picked up there?" inquired Mr. Pick.

"No; it's not worth while exposing your game at sixpenny pool, nor your knowledge of whist at shilling points—besides it would have been all against the game I was playing to be counted anything but a fair performer in those lines."

"Good, very good!" remarked the bookmaker. "There's nothing like understanding when one's little talents are best kept in the background. Or else, Dick, amongst yokels, you're likely to do well at those amusements."

"Well, you agree with me," replied the other impatiently; "fishing for gudgeon is waste of time when there are salmon in the pool. Will you stand to me?"

"I'll come down and have a look at the thing, anyway. You can put me up for a day or two?"

"I'll put you up for a week or two, if you will make up as an old-fashioned sporting pastor and call yourself my uncle."

"What, the fellow with the property in Yorkshire?" exclaimed Mr. Pick.

"That's it. I want you to represent old John Madingley of Bingwell. He's an old man who never goes out of his own county, and they know nothing about him in Tunnleton."

"Never goes out of Yorkshire, don't he? By heavens, Dick! I saw him at Goodwood last week. The old man came all the way to see his 'Wandering Nun' win the 'Ham.'"

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

BY MRS. HUMPHRY.

LONDON was long in following the lead of Paris with regard to first-night representations at principal theatres, but there is now little to complain of in that respect. The audiences that assemble at the Lyceum, the St. James', the Haymarket, the Prince of Wales', the Savoy, the Comedy, the Royal Court, and on special occasions at other theatres when a piece is played for the first time, is a kind of concentration of what is in many senses the best of London Society. The cream of literature, the arts, rank and fashion is to be seen in the stalls and private boxes, while the pit and gallery are occupied by those keenly discerning "first-nighters," who have rubbed their wits to sharpness by constant practice in their self-imposed task of criticism. Incompetence finds no mercy at their hands, and even the highest art fares badly if accompanied by any token of conceit or pomposity.

The first night of Mrs. Bernard-Beere's impersonation of "Lena Despard" at the Opera Comique was a brilliant occasion of the kind. To say that the audience was as interesting as the play would perhaps appear to be undervaluing the latter; but if I could only mention the names of some score or two of the individuals composing the former, there would be seen to be no exaggeration. During the intervals between the acts every one looked at every one else, though when the curtain was up attention was riveted upon the stage. Mrs. Bernard-Beere has never been so well fitted with a character as she now is in Mr. Phillips' heroine at the Opera Comique. "As in a Looking Glass," the title of the play, may be hoped to be a misnomer, for there cannot be many women so absolutely heartless and so wholly unscrupulous as Lena Despard. That she is fascinating and enchains the attention, even in the book and apart from the charm of Mrs. Bernard-Beere's impersonation, is due to sheer skill on the part of the author. He makes the reader see how pretty she is, how graceful, how outwardly sympathetic, and in some incomprehensible fashion he throws across her path (perhaps in the shape of Jack Fortinbras) the heavy shadow of her tragic end. She is never light-hearted or girlish for a single moment. Her smiles are on the surface. No one could believe, without having seen, to what perfection Mrs. Bernard-Beere interprets this difficult character, no how she wins the sympathy of the audience for the cold-hearted

and calculating Lena. The grace of her movements is accentuated by the beauty of her dresses, which show the inimitable Paris touch in the manipulation of the drapery and the flow of the folds. When she appeared in the most poetic of floating, fur-edged primrose tea-gowns, flower-decked heads leaned towards each other in the stalls to whisper notes of admiration. Perhaps the tan-coloured Monte Carlo dress was the one that aroused the chief envy in feminine hearts. "If I could find out who made it, I would have one exactly like it"—how many among the audience thought that!

Later in the same evening came the costume ball and masque of painters at the Royal Institute. Looked back upon from the distance of two or three weeks, it comes back to the memory like a kaleidoscope of historic figures. This was no ball of fancy dress, with endless Snows, Twilights, Nights, Stars, and Sunsets. The styles were restricted to those illustrative of some period of history, and a very complete panorama of the eras of clothing was provided in consequence. Ladies of ancient Greece and Rome conversed with English cavaliers and French kings. A stalwart Roundhead made his bow to a mediæval lady in a "side-gowne;" while a Mexican gentleman of not a hundred years ago danced to the music of a modern waltz, composed this year, with a lady of Venice who dated from the fourteenth century.

The gavotte was a much prettier sight than were the tableaux, and it was a matter for regret that it was not danced upon a raised dais, so that all might see the graceful play of fan, turn of head and curve of neck that form such prominent features in the old-world dance.

The pavane is to be the next revival from the ball-rooms of by-gone times. To dance in character, the performers should wear Louis XIII. dresses, with their large-puffed sleeves and wide vandyked lace turned back from the shoulders and drooping over the arms. The over-dress and petticoat would not be any novelty in these days of Louis XV. gowns, and the lace wired high at the back of the neck would be becoming to many and by no means a startling innovation. The style of hair, however, would be rather trying. The coiffure of that period was perfectly flat on the top. The back hair was arranged round a comb, while a thick bunch of curls hung over either ear, concealing both. The buckled or rosetted shoes, with pointed toes and high heels, are familiar enough to us all.

The men's dress is sufficiently picturesque, with silk stockings, rosetted shoes, knee-breeches ending in a frill of rich lace and tied with ribbons at the knee, tight jacket of silk or velvet, with slashed sleeves and short coat hanging loose from the shoulders. Their deep cavalier collars and long love-locks are inseparably connected in our minds with a later period of our own island history.

The dance itself is a graceful one, with much sinuous turning and

twisting of the dancers, many sliding steps, deep curtseys and pretty pointed toe brought up to the recover. The music is in triple time, like that of the minuet, and the first remarkable feature in the dance is the starting off of two out of each four couples to the very end of the room in the minuet step, and their slow dance back again to place themselves as *vis-à-vis* to the other two couples. Immediately after the latter set off on a similar expedition, returning to their original positions. This preliminary canter concluded, the real business of the dance begins, strangely enough, by scattering the four couples to the very extremities of the room. Brought together again in the centre, still holding hands, they content themselves with a more limited space, ranging themselves as though for a quadrille. The third figure is a pretty one, but one in which men in modern costume would probably feel themselves to be ridiculous. Each gentleman kneels on one knee, his sword well out at the back, his right hand resting—palm upwards—on his right knee. Each lady, taking a scrap of her over-dress in each hand, sets off with the left foot and glides coquettishly in front of the partner opposite her own in a diagonal direction. Then the men rise, lady and cavalier making each other a low reverence, the whole four couples in the same moment. Much of the beauty of this figure consists in the curtsey being made exactly simultaneously by the eight dancers. This was the only point in which the dancers at the costume ball failed in their gavotte. Some of them were rising after their low bow, at the moment when others were making the descent.

This reverence over, the cavaliers go down again on one knee, while the ladies dance off, each arriving before her very own partner, when there are fresh curtseys, the men rising and giving their right hands to the ladies, who pirouette without letting go the hand, being supported by the other arm of their partners, which is passed round their waist. In the last figure the four dancers form a circle by taking hands, and then letting go, but still holding the arms raised high in the air, each couple turns to each other with a step to the right and then one to the left, repeating this double movement four times. After this each couple stands ranged behind the first, and dances off out of the room by a door on the opposite side to that by which they danced into it.

It will be seen that no ordinary ballroom will suffice for this rather exigent revival from old-world days, or rather nights. We are further threatened with a tarentelle, which is to be danced by eight couples in Italian dress. This is to be swift and animated, in contradistinction to the stately movements of the gavotte and minuet.

The Ascot of the Jubilee Year was a brilliant one, especially on the Cup day, which was favoured by weather as bright as the occasion. Dark skies and rain-clouds had prevented the appearance of summer dresses and diaphanous bonnets previous to Ascot

week, but all was atoned by the favourable chance vouchsafed by the clerk of the climate on *the Thursday*. Such embroideries as were displayed have never been surpassed. Unfortunately the great bulk of these exquisite embroideries are done abroad, where greater neatness of detail and beauty of finish is bestowed upon the work than seems to come within the range of our home-workers. A lady who wished to encourage English trade gave some embroideries to be copied, and was rewarded for her patriotic endeavours by a series of calamities caused by loose stitches and dropping beads. Showers of the latter fell from her when she moved, mute witnesses to the incapacity of her countrywomen. Why should this be? Could it possibly be caused by an unselfish desire on the part of the British workwoman not to eclipse the British workman? The very smallest amount of industry, conscientiousness and patient endeavour would be sufficient to throw the male worker into the shade, and perhaps his wife and daughter are unwilling to rise superior to the wont of the family head.

The coolest of pale mauves and the softest of green were to be seen on the lawn at Ascot. Heliotrope, grey and white were the colours most favoured. Only the pale tints of heliotrope were successful when unrelieved by white or cream. Embroidered lawns and zephyrs in this delightful tint looked well, and suited the brightness of the day and the festivity of the occasion, contrasting well with the stately heaviness of velvets, brocades, and satins. White satin formed the foundation of a great number of the Ascot dresses. Over this material was draped almost every kind of material in white, cream-colour, pale pink, primrose, coral-tints, and cool amber. Oriental embroideries, alternating with stripes of openwork, showed the glimmer of the satin between the close-set stitches. As a rule, the paler the tint the more successful was the dress. The small bonnets, perched on three hairs, were smart in proportion to their smallness, and the best-dressed of the visitors to the grand stand had made a point of having their sunshades matched to their bonnets. Airiest of drawn crêpe parasols made pretence to keep off the sun from bonnets as airy. On one sunshade hovered a cloud of butterflies, of every colour, from the many-hued emperor to the flower-like blue and the tintless white. A butterfly bonnet was visible at intervals beneath this canopy of pale pink crêpe, so softly edged with grey. The very lightest of white gauzes, embroideries and laces are this season whipped to a sort of frothy cream, and christened sunshades. Exquisite imitations of real flowers in silk and filoselle are wrought upon delicate lisse or net, and the whole is embellished with knots of ribbon matching the colour of the flowers. The handles are often flat in shape, and the fashionable mode of holding them—for there is a fashion in even so trivial a thing as this—is to catch them tightly up

near the wires, and to keep the sunshade well down over the bonnet or hat.

There has seldom of late years been a fuller season than the present. The principal streets at the West End are blocked three or four times daily. Every one seems bent on celebrating, in some fashion or other, the jubilee year of Her Majesty's reign. With some this only means that they spend more on their dresses and bonnets. Everything serves as a pretext for a new gown, just as everything in certain countries, which shall be nameless, serves as an "excuse for the glass."

With others, jubilee is simply a word for advertisements, and in this sense the most loyal of our good queen's subjects are exceedingly weary of it. Others, who are wedded to philanthropic works, do more than ever for the widow and the orphan, thus celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our monarch's accession in the very best of all excellent ways.

Country cousins, who are flocking to town in shoals, may like a word of counsel as to where to go and what to see. Let them by no means miss "The Red Lamp," at the Comedy; "Dorothy," with its bright and tuneful music, at the Prince of Wales'; "Held by the Enemy" at the Princess's, or "Lady Clancarty" at the St. James's; "Dandy Dick" at the Royal Court Theatre, will give them a "splendid laugh;" nor must they omit to go to the Prince's Hall to hear the charming recitations given by Miss Adelaide Detchon, a young American lady with the sweetest voice, the most graceful figure and the most girlishly pretty face in the world. Seen against a background of Liberty draperies, lit up with tinted fairy lights and verdant with tall palms, she charms the eye as much as her voice delights the ear.

It is scarcely necessary to advise the country cousins not to forget to look in at the shop windows, and, if possible, to remain on in "the little village" till July is a trifle on the wane, for then the bargains of this jubilee year will be visible behind plate glass in endless variety.

A MODERN POLYPHEME.

A FLASH of colour through the trees,
A step upon the trembling plank,
A white sail flapping in the breeze,
And then, a maiden leaves the bank.

Each day I watch her, and she guides
Her little boat with dexterous hand,
And, like a river-goddess, rides
In gracious triumph through the land.

I watch her as she lightly tacks,
And marvel at the art which steers
Her boat into the quiet "backs,"
And sorrow when it disappears.

Who, in the summer evening, knows
What gentle feelings fill her breast,
Or near what bower the water flows
Which bears her dingey to its rest!

Perchance a lover, dark and tall,
Awaits her in some flowery nook,
And gazing at her, gathers all
Her thoughts, as from an open book.

Perchance—I have not learnt her name,
I know not where her home may be,
For one brief space alone I claim
Her beauty, as she passes me.

For then the Heaven-winged dreams, which smile
And fade with youth's first golden hour,
Come back, and soothe my soul awhile,
Like perfume from a vanished flower.

And so I watch for her, nor care
Where Acis tarries, down the stream;
Enough to see her—I forswear
Thy dark emotions, Polypheme.

C. RADFORD.